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League official assails U.S.

CAIRO (AFP) — The United States can no longer be considered a sponsor of the Middle East peace process and has undermined the U.N. by its support of Israel, the Arab League said Monday. "It is impossible to describe the U.S. as a sponsor of the peace process, because a sponsor is supposed to be neutral and committed," the league deputy secretary general, Mawfraq Al Allaf, told journalists. "The U.S. is not only biased to Israel it has prevented the United Nations, which is supposed to preserve peace and security, from taking any step to condemn Israel," he said. Washington rejected a U.N. report which said Israel may have deliberately shelled a U.N. camp in Cana, killing 102 refugees during its 17-day onslaught last month against Hizbollah guerrillas in Lebanon. The U.S. has also resisted attempts in the Security Council to issue a condemnation of Israel for the shelling. Meanwhile, Mr. Allaf also condemned an Israeli strike on Sunday against Hizbollah guerrillas, the Jewish state's first since the ceasefire which ended its grapes of wrath operation in South Lebanon.



AMMAN TUESDAY, MAY 14, 1996, DHUL-HIJJAH 25, 1416

Turkey wants command of U.S.-led force

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish Defence Minister Oztan Sungurlu said Monday that Ankara should assume operational command of a U.S.-led multinational force monitoring northern Iraq, but with Western powers meeting the cost. Operation Provide Comfort was created in 1991 in the wake of the Gulf war to protect northern Iraqi Kurds against attacks by Iraqi troops. The force, which is composed of an air wing formed by U.S., French and British military aircraft, is deployed mainly at a base in southern Turkey. Turkey spearheaded efforts for the creation of Provide Comfort at the time, but claims the force has been acting independently from the Turkish authority, and is asking for modifications in the operation's command and structure. Mr. Sungurlu, in an interview with the English-language newspaper Turkish Daily News, expressed for the first time Turkey's wish to take over the operation's full command and implementation. "Turkey's air force can undertake the missions of the planes which Provide Comfort is currently using to monitor the situation in northern Iraq," he said.

Settler killed in West Bank

Israel may tighten closure ahead of May 29 elections

BEIT EL (Agencies) — One young Jewish settler was killed and three others wounded Monday when suspected Palestinian militants opened fire on them with automatic weapons outside this settlement near Ramallah, military sources said. In the first deadly anti-Israeli attack in more than two months, the assailants sprayed bullets at a crowd of religious students hitchhiking at the entrance to Beit El, hitting one student in the head and another in the chest, witnesses said. They then fired at a passing car before fleeing. Two women in the car were slightly hurt by flying glass. One student, whose name and age was not immediately released, died later at a Jerusalem hospital of a head wound. A 17-year-old Israeli-American, David Reuven Bau, was in moderate condition with a bullet wound in the chest. Before reaching Beit El, the attackers fired at an armoured bus carrying local workers, but hit no one. Palestinian sources said the Israeli army sealed off the nearby Al Jalazun refugee camp and blocked roads leading from the Beit El area towards Ramallah, which is under control of the autonomous Palestinian National Authority. Al Jalazun is under joint Israeli-Palestinian control. Some reports said the



FIRST LADIES MEET: Her Majesty Queen Noor chairs a meeting of world first ladies at the Royal Palace on Monday ahead of Tuesday's formal opening of a biennial meeting in Amman to discuss improving the lives of rural women in developing countries (Reuters photo)

Peres not to visit Jordan before elections

'Decision taken in Amman, not in Jerusalem'

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter
AMMAN — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres will not go ahead with plans he had made to visit Amman for talks with His Majesty King Hussein before the May 29 general elections, the Jerusalem Post daily reported yesterday. The newspaper, which had led its news stories with a report on the Cairo summit and statements made by the King on Jerusalem, said: "It was uncertain whether King Hussein wanted to avoid a visit by Peres at this time so as not to be accused of seeking to influence the election's outcome." The Jerusalem Post, added, however, that "Jordanian Public opinion was fiercely opposed to Israel's action in southern Lebanon, capped by the attack on Cana. There were parliamentary motions by the Jordanian opposition to cut ties with Israel, and the independence day celebration at the embassy in Amman was boycotted by many Jordanians." In its story on the summit which has headlined "Hussein: Jerusalem should be capital of Palestinian state," the newspaper focussed on the King's statements following the Cairo meeting, particularly his pledge to support Palestinians' demand for Jerusalem on the capital of a future state and his emphasis on regaining the holy city as a "symbol of peace."

Crown Prince urges world effort to better refugees' conditions

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Monday called on the world community to deal with the question of Palestinian refugees in a comprehensive perspective embracing the humanitarian, material, and economic dimensions of the issue. He also called for a regional and comprehensive solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees who are now hosted in the Arab states urging all concerned parties to be involved in finding this solution. Speaking at a meeting with a delegation representing the working group on refugees of the multilateral phase of the Middle East peace process, Prince Hassan noted that the Jordan-Israel peace treaty defined the principles and the procedures which should be followed in the process of negotiating a settlement for the refugee problem. The Crown Prince urged the delegation, which is led by Andrew Robinson, director general for the Middle East peace process at the Canadian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Trade, to employ all available expertise and information in order to give momentum to the peace process, stressing that the refugee question was a regional issue related with other basic regional questions like water, the environment, economic and human resources development. He said that proposals to be adopted by the working group on refugees should provide for integrated services and to improving the quality of life of refugees in the five Arab states hosting them, and should also benefit the countries that have been hosting the refugees, notably Jordan, no matter whether the refugees have been living in camps or in urban centres. The delegation thanked the Crown Prince for his keenness on dealing with the refugee problem, noting that Jordan had been a real partner with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in helping the refugees and in participating in the multilateral group meetings to solve the problem. The delegation, which includes representatives of several leading donor countries, touring Palestinian refugee camps to hear their residents' views on peace in the region. The delegation's tour includes Talbik, Marka, Huson, Jerash, and Baqa'a camps.

King Hussein to visit Turkey

ANKARA (AFP) — King Hussein is to visit Ankara this week to discuss Middle East issues at the invitation of President Suleyman Demirel, the Foreign Ministry said Monday. "The two countries will exchange views and information on the latest developments regarding the Middle East peace process during the visit," planned for Thursday, ministry spokesman Nurettin Nurkan told a news briefing.

Arafat suffers from flu, exhaustion

GAZA CITY (AP) — Doctors on Monday ordered bed rest for Yasser Arafat who is suffering from influenza and exhaustion. Mr. Arafat, 65, returned to Gaza on Monday after meetings in Egypt with President Hosni Mubarak and King Hussein. Mr. Arafat's physicians, Omar Dakka and Issa Tarazi, had asked him not to go to Egypt, saying he should rest instead, but Mr. Arafat ignored the advice. When he returned Monday, his staff did not schedule appointments and Mr. Arafat stayed home, said sources in his office.

Six jailed for Bahrain sabotage

MANAMA (AFP) — Six people were jailed for between two and five years after they were found guilty of setting cars ablaze during anti-government unrest, an Interior Ministry spokesman was quoted as saying Monday. The state security court sentenced four "saboteurs" to five years in prison and two others to two years in jail for torching the cars and endangering the lives of innocent people, the spokesman told the Gulf Daily News. Two other people received suspended prison terms. He did not say when the incidents took place. Last week the Bahraini press reported that 11 men were condemned to between one year and five years in prison for the March 13 firebombing of a restaurant where British and other customers managed to escape.

Israelis attack Hizbollah bases

SIDON (Agencies) — Israel attacked suspected Hizbollah positions in South Lebanon on Monday with missiles and artillery shells, a day after five Israeli soldiers were wounded in the Jewish state's occupied "security zone," police and military officials said. "Our helicopters struck Sojod and Al Rihan in the northern part of the security zone and the pilots reported hitting their targets," an Israeli army spokesman said in Tel Aviv. Lebanese police said an air-to-surface missile was fired at an area between Sojod and Kabal Al Rafih, in the Iranian-backed Hizbollah stronghold of Iqlim Al Tuffah in South Lebanon. A spokesman for Hizbollah in South Lebanon confirmed the report but said the guerrillas were not aware of any military operation in the region. Israeli artillery also fired about 20 shells at Jabal Al Rafih and Rihan in the same area, police said. There were no immediate reports of casualties. On Sunday, Israeli warplanes and artillery hit Hizbollah strongholds in the mountainous Iqlim Al Tuffah and the Bekaa Valley, on the outskirts of Israel's self-declared "security zone" in South Lebanon, Lebanese police said. Hizbollah said there were no casualties. Israel's retaliation Sunday came just hours after five Israeli soldiers were injured, one seriously in an attack by Hizbollah in the occupied border zone. The soldiers, who were evacuated to a hospital in Israel, were struck by an explosive device planted in the path of the jeep near Sujud, Israeli military officials said. The five soldiers were

Peres says Assad turned down call for summit saying not yet

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad has refused requests for an Israeli-Syrian summit to revive the two countries' suspended peace negotiations, Prime Minister Shimon Peres has said. "Assad let us know that the time was not right," Mr. Peres was quoted as saying on Monday by Israeli army radio. Speaking late Sunday during a campaign meeting for Israeli general elections on May 29, Mr. Peres said he had told Mr. Assad in a message sent via U.S. intermediaries that a meeting "at the highest level" was necessary to further the peace process. U.S.-brokered peace talks between Israel and Syria resumed in December under Washington but made little concrete progress and were suspended following a spate of suicide bombings in Israel in late February and early March. Tensions between Israel and Syria rose as a result of Israel's offensive last month against Hizbollah guerrillas in Lebanon, where Damascus maintains some 35,000 troops and holds a dominant influence over the government. Syria on Sunday warned Israel against trying to separate the Lebanese and Syrian tracks of the peace process. "By trying to lend a political character to the monitoring committee" for the ceasefire between Israel and Hizbollah guerrillas in Lebanon, Israel is aiming "to push Lebanon into a separate deal," said Syrian state television. "Israel wants to separate the Syrian and Lebanese tracks" of the peace process, it said in a commentary. Syria has accused Israel of hampering the creation of the international ceasefire monitoring group by trying to add a political role to its function of maintaining security. A five-nation group was set up to monitor the ceasefire which took effect on April 27, ending the 17-day war between Israel and Hizbollah. Negotiators from France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the United States met in Washington Friday for the first time but failed to agree on a headquarters for the group or whether it will be military or political in nature. Syria showed its patience over the Lebanon ceasefire committee was running out when its ambassador in Washington, Walid Moallem, said that the next session of negotiations in the U.S. capital Tuesday would have to be decisive. "We must finish on Tuesday, whether we succeed or fail. If there is no agreement, we must announce the failure," he warned in an interview with the Lebanese newspaper Al Diyar. Richard Jones, the U.S. ambassador to Lebanon, said he expected the monitoring group to be set up this week.

Iran inaugurates 'Silk Road' railway as showpiece progress

TEHRAN (R) — Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Monday inaugurated a new rail link between Iran and Central Asia which he said revived the old "Silk Road" as a symbol of East-West relations. Official Iranian media said Mr. Rafsanjani spoke at the opening of the railway in Mashhad in northeastern Iran, attended by heads of state and dignitaries from more than 50 countries. The Iranian president and 11 heads of state later flew to Sarakhs, on the border with Turkmenistan. Other dignitaries and officials boarded the train, dubbed "Pride," making its first journey from Mashhad to Sarakhs. "The Silk Road railway... shortens the long distance between Chinese ports to the Persian Gulf, is the bridge for the region and the world and is a clear example of Iran's priority on regional cooperation," Mr. Rafsanjani said in a ceremony in Sarakhs, broadcast live on Iranian television. Turkish President Suleyman Demirel said at the ceremony: "A historic legend comes to life. The Silk Road was not only about a route but was about the coming together of various nations." "It is not only a railway being inaugurated today, but contents and peoples of various continents are being connected." The heads of state were to go later to Tedzhen in Turkmenistan. Mr. Rafsanjani had earlier

Ghali: Iraq deal needs more work

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali said Monday that more work was needed to finalise an oil-for-food deal with Iraq, despite intensive talks over the weekend. The U.N. chief spent "a great deal" of the weekend in discussions, in person and by telephone, on the deal, U.N. spokeswoman Sylvana Foa said at a news briefing. An agreement would allow Iraq to resume limited oil exports in return for humanitarian supplies. Ms. Foa quoted Mr. Ghali as saying that "there is still some work to be done" on the memorandum of understanding (MoU) being negotiated by U.N. and Iraqi negotiators, who opened a fourth round of discussions on May 6. "He hopes that when he gets back from his trip to Moscow that we'll be able to conclude the MoU," Ms. Foa said. A U.N. spokesman said that Mr. Ghali, who was flying out late Monday, was due back in New York on Friday or Saturday. The negotiations between the U.N. and Iraqi delegations were to resume on Monday at 1900 GMT. In Iraq on Monday, the official Al Jumhuriyah newspaper said that "things until now are going well." The report propelled the dinar upward to 720 to the dollar on Monday from 920 to the dollar on Sunday, and sent the price of five grammes of 21 carat gold down to 35,000 dinars from 55,000 on Sunday, traders and merchants said. Gold is usually seen as a hedge against inflation. But the Iraqi newspaper still linked the success of the talks to non-interference from the United States and Britain, which have said the accord must prevent Baghdad from regaining political influence in northern Iraq and from reentering the international banking system. An Iraqi Oil Ministry official told AFP Monday that Baghdad was capable of resuming oil exports as soon as a deal was reached. "The technical capacities and the state of the export terminals allow Iraq to resume crude exports immediately after an agreement with the United Nations is announced," he said asking not to be named. Meanwhile, the head of the Oil Ministry's pipeline department, Salah Aziz, told Al Jumhuriyah that the pipelines leading to the terminals were "ready to function." "Repair and maintenance work have finished in anticipation of a resumption of oil exports," Mr. Aziz said. Iraq said in March that the Iraqi-Turkish pipeline to a Mediterranean terminal — through which most of the oil is to be sent — "was operational," it also said it has tested its Gulf terminal at Mina Al Bakr. The Cyprus-based MEES said last month that it would take Iraq two to three months to export oil after a deal is signed because the U.N. would first have to put its distribution infrastructure and logistics in place throughout Iraq. Chief Iraqi negotiator Abdul Amir Al Anbari said in New York on Saturday that there was a slight improvement in his talks, after an intervention by Dr. Ghali. Mr. Anbari had earlier said the negotiations were going "from worse to worse." Since returning to the United Nations on May 6 for the fourth round of talks, Mr. Anbari has consistently attacked Britain and the United States for insisting on amendments to a draft MoU understanding which he said had been worked out with the United Nations on April 10. The two countries have said they want to ensure that Baghdad complies strictly with U.N. requirements on aid distribution and banking issues. (Continued on page 7)

The Rotary Club of Amman Cosmopolitan welcome the participants of the International Steering Committee on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women. We hope you have a successful meeting.

Iraq 'renewing' bid to smuggle diesel, U.S. says

DUBAI (R) — Iraq has renewed attempts to smuggle diesel fuel exports in Gulf waters, but a U.S.-led multinational patrol enforcing U.N. sanctions has intercepted most of the vessels, shipping sources in the Gulf said on Monday.

They said several vessels had tried since early March to evade the sanctions in the first such attempts by Iraq to smuggle diesel fuel since last August. The vessels were each carrying between 1,000 to 3,000 tonnes of diesel fuel.

"There is very little oil coming out by sea, but they (Iraqis) are trying to again. Some are making it through, but not much," one source said.

Asked about the shipping sources' reports, Commander T. McCreary of the U.N. Navy told Reuters: "Since March 7, we started to see some diesel oil come back out of Iraq in small amounts."

He said by telephone from the U.S. Sixth Fleet's Gulf headquarters in Bahrain that of 12 vessels intercepted since then by patrols enforcing the U.N. sanctions, seven were carrying diesel fuel and the rest dates.

That compared with nine vessels diverted between October 1994 and August 1995, when they stopped smuggling diesel fuel.

Spokesman McCreary said between November 1995 and March, the multinational force diverted 43 vessels — 11 carrying dates from Iraq and two heading towards Iraq carrying computer parts, batteries and tyres.

The multinational force has been checking shipping in the Gulf to enforce a U.N. trade embargo imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Iraq has complained to the United Nations that the patrols violated its territorial waters.

The shipping sources said the vessels carrying diesel fuel had false papers claiming they were loaded with the Iranian port of Abadan.

"The vessels were allowed to use Iranian territorial waters, each one was carrying

paperwork saying they were in Abadan," one said. "The false papers used by the vessels are not being accepted by the multinational force."

Asked about that, spokesman McCreary said: "As before, we have seen a lot of false Iranian papers with the vessels that have come out (of Iraq). They said they have been in Abadan, but we know they were not."

He said that at the end of March, a vessel called Shaima tried to raise the Iranian flag and head towards Iranian waters when multinational patrols approached to intercept it. "We got it before it got into Iranian waters. We found six flags from six different countries on board."

The shipping sources said they knew of cases when Iran detained traditional wooden trading boats, known as dhows, coming from Iraq for allegedly having false Iranian papers.

Iran has repeatedly denied claims it was cooperating with Iraq to violate U.N. sanctions and has protested to the United Nations about what it calls the illegal presence of U.S. forces in the Gulf.

Ships found to be violating the sanctions are normally turned over to Gulf Arab states for inspection, contraband oil or goods are sold and the proceeds deposited in a U.N. escrow account.

U.S. President Bill Clinton said on May 4 in a letter to Congress that Washington had evidence of "continued Iranian complicity in the export of Iraqi petroleum products through the provision of vessels violating the sanctions with false paperwork and the use of Iranian territorial waters."

He said that in March and April, patrols intercepted vessels carrying Iraqi petroleum products worth an estimated \$1.1 million and dates worth an estimated \$1.4 million.

Mr. Clinton's letter was made available to Reuters in Dubai.

Palestinian groups assail ruling on Abu Marzouk

DAMASCUS (AFP) — The Palestinian opposition here reacted angrily to a U.S. court ruling authorising the extradition to Israel of a top Hamas leader, describing the decision as a "flagrant attack on the Palestinian people."

In a statement, the coalition of organisations and parties opposed to the peace process with Israel called on the United States to annul the ruling against Musa Abu Marzouk, the political director of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas).

"We hold the American administration entirely responsible for this criminal decision as well as for any consequences which may result," said the statement.

It described the decision to allow Mr. Abu Marzouk's extradition as "strictly political," and said it was taken "to help the electoral campaign (of Israeli Prime Minister Shimon) Peres" and that it had "no grounding in civil law."

In Wednesday's ruling,

U.S. District Court Judge Kevin Duffy said the crimes charged in Israel's arrest warrant for Mr. Abu Marzouk "constitute extraditable offences."

He ruled there was "a reasonable belief that Mr. Abu Marzouk was guilty of conspiracy and of the substantive crimes charged" and that he "knew of Hamas' plan to carry out violent, murderous attacks that be selected the leadership and supplied the money to enable the attacks to take place."

Mr. Duffy said the Israeli government had linked Mr. Abu Marzouk to at least 10 incidents involving the deaths of 55 people and injury of hundreds of others.

Mr. Abu Marzouk has lived in the United States for 14 years and his defence lawyers contend he is a political chief of Hamas and was not involved in military actions by the movement.

They accused the judge of bias and said Mr. Abu Marzouk would appeal the decision.

Bashir says Sudan has expelled foreign militants working against governments

CAIRO (AFP) — Khartoum has expelled a number of expatriates plotting against the governments of their home countries, Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir said in an interview Monday.

"Anyone with activities against his country's government or any other governments living in Sudan must leave immediately," Lieutenant-General Bashir told the Arabic weekly Al-Wasat.

"This has been implemented with a number of individuals who we felt were conducting such activities, so we asked them to leave," he said, without specifying how many individuals had been expelled.

"We do not want Sudan to be a staging ground for any activities hostile to our neighbours," he added.

Cairo has accused Sudan of harbouring and supporting militants waging a four-year

armed campaign against the government, while Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda also say Khartoum backs separatists on their soil.

The U.N. has slapped diplomatic sanctions on Sudan for refusing to extradite to Ethiopia three militants accused of attempting to kill Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa in June 1995.

Gen. Bashir insisted that the sanctions, which came into effect on Friday, will not derail Khartoum's attempts to restore relations with its neighbours.

"The resolution did not request that diplomatic relations with Sudan be severed entirely, so we will still have a presence and there will be opportunities for diplomatic action," Gen. Bashir noted.

UN sanctions call on nations to reduce the size of Sudanese representations and restrict travel by its di-

plomats.

Gen. Bashir said that he hoped the U.N. would not carry out its threat to strengthen sanctions if Khartoum continues to refuse to comply with resolutions, but added, "at every step we will have a response."

Khartoum denies the three fugitives are still on its soil, while press reports have placed one of them in Afghanistan.

Pakistan: No militants

Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said her country had gotten rid of all "terrorist elements" hunted by other countries, in an interview published on Monday.

"Peshawar and other Pakistani cities are free of terrorist elements," Ms. Bhutto told the Arabic weekly Al-Wasat.

"True, a number of extremists came to Pakistan

from Islamic Arab countries during the Afghan war (against Soviet occupation), but our government has compelled them to return to their home countries," she said.

"No longer see any reason for worry" by Arab governments, she said.

"One of the first steps my government took was a crackdown on those residing in Pakistan illegally, and consequently some of them left Pakistan for European countries or Afghanistan," Ms. Bhutto said.

Cairo has claimed that Egyptian living in Pakistan are linked to extremist in Egypt.

Egypt's ambassador to Islamabad, Numan Galal, told Al-Wasat last week that 2,000 veterans of the Afghan conflict, 40 per cent of them Egyptians, are living in the Pakistani town Peshawar and near the Afghan border.

Peres woos Arab Israelis, ultraorthodox Jews

TEL AVIV (R) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres is now wooing both Arab Israelis and ultra-orthodox Jews in earnest in hopes of winning their votes in Israel's May 29 elections.

His government, overriding objections of its left-wing backers, on Sunday fulfilled a promise to religious parties by approving the investment of \$3.4 million in an ultra-orthodox Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

He and several of his key ministers then met Israeli Arab leaders to try to calm their anger over Israel's blitz against guerrillas in Lebanon last month that killed some

200 Lebanese, most civilians. Israel earlier suffered its first ceasefire since an April 27 ceasefire ended the onslaught. Three officers and two enlisted men were wounded in two guerrilla attacks in Israel's occupation zone in South Lebanon, the army said.

The ceasefire barred targeting civilians but not attacks on military objectives.

Mr. Peres has kept a lead of four to five percentage points over right-wing Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu in opinion polls ahead of the elections when Israelis will, for the first time, directly

elect a prime minister as well as vote for a party.

The campaigns of Likud and Mr. Peres' Labour Party both argue that they can ensure peace with security and Likud said the casualties proved that Mr. Peres' attempt to provide security via the Lebanon bombardment had failed.

Mr. Peres, speaking to academic supporters, said in reaction to the Likud criticism: "We have real, difficult problems in the Middle East that are not easy to solve. I have no doubt that in this case the real solution is a political one and we'll arrive at that."

The Arab Israeli leaders who met Mr. Peres kept him guessing about their vote.

"We did not promise him we would vote for him," said Abdul Wahab Al Darawshah, leader of the Arab Democratic Party and a member of Israel's parliament, adding that he and his colleagues were still examining their position.

Israel's 850,000 Arab voters, who comprise 12 per cent of the electorate, complain of discrimination by successive Israeli governments, particularly in funding. Mr. Darawshah said Mr. Peres promised to improve their standard of living.

Peace Now slams funding for settlement

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israel's Peace Now slammed as "political bribery" the government's decision on Sunday to invest over 11 million shekels (\$3.4 million) in an ultra-orthodox Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

"Peace Now's response to the government decision to transfer funds to Kiryat Sefer: Unnecessary and damaging political bribery," a statement issued to the media by Israel's largest peace group said.

Acting cabinet secretary Aaron Lishansky confirmed the government had approved the funds at its weekly meeting on Sunday. "Eleven million and some,

that's correct," Mr. Lishansky told Reuters.

Israel Radio said the decision came in the wake of Prime Minister Shimon Peres' promise to ultra-orthodox political parties to invest in Kiryat Sefer.

Mr. Peres is in a close race for May 29 elections with right-wing Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu. Both men are vying for the ultra-orthodox vote. Polls on Friday showed Mr. Peres maintaining a four to five per cent lead over Mr. Netanyahu.

The radio said 2.5 million shekels were earmarked for general development of housing units built four years ago at Kiryat Sefer, three million to complete infrastructure and

more than six million for general development of 650 housing units begun in 1994.

Israel froze new settlement building when Mr. Peres' Labour Party, then led by Yitzhak Rabin, swept the Likud from power in 1992 elections. But Mr. Rabin, killed in November by a right-wing Jew opposed to peace moves with Palestinians, permitted development of existing settlements.

The freeze on building new settlements won Israel \$10 billion in U.S. loan guarantees denied it under Likud, which pursued an aggressive settlement campaign. The Likud has vowed to lift the freeze on new settlement building if elected.

In 1993, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) signed a historic interim peace deal providing self-rule in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip occupied by Israel since 1967 war.

Under the settlements, where about 140,000 Jews live amidst nearly two million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip remain. The fate of the settlements and other tough issues are to be thrashed out in final peace talks which began this month and are to resume after the elections.

Palestinians, who want to establish an independent state in Gaza and the West Bank, view all settlements as obstacles to peace.

PLO paying Ansari's legal costs for trial

OSLO (AFP) — Legal fees for Palestinian hijacker Soraya Ansari, who is on trial in Germany for the 1977 hijacking of a German airliner, are being paid by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), her lawyer said on Monday.

The PLO has so far paid Heidi Bache-Wiig 50.0 kroner (about \$7,700) for

Ms. Ansari's defence, she told Norwegian Radio NRK Dagsnytt. Total legal costs are expected to amount to 250,000-300,000 kroner (\$38,500-\$46,500).

"The money has in its entirety been used to cover the first visits in Germany. We are talking airline flights, hotel stays, court costs and talks with my client," she

said. Ms. Ansari, 42, is the sole survivor of four Palestinians who hijacked a Lufthansa plane to Somalia in a bid to free 11 leaders of the German far-left group Red Army Faction and two members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The general pilot was killed by the hijackers in Aden, Yemen, and three hijackers were killed when German special forces stormed the plane in Mogadishu.

Ms. Ansari was tracked down by Norwegian police in 1994 and arrested, after having lived in Norway since 1991. After a long legal battle in Norway, she was extradited to Germany in November to stand trial.

Bush fire sweeps through Golan heights

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A hush fire late Sunday swept through the Golan Heights, which were occupied by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war. Israel radio reported. The blaze ravaged dozens of hectares of scrub in the Southern Golan, and firemen who called in helicopters took several hours to douse the fire due to exploding landmines. Several Israelis were evacuated to hospital suffering from smoke inhalation.

Marijuana found growing outside Israeli foreign ministry

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Anti-narcotics officers were called in Monday when a Jerusalem municipal gardener discovered a marijuana plant growing in the shadow of the Israeli foreign ministry. The plant, whose cultivation is outlawed in Israel, was growing in a city garden next to the foreign ministry and within sight of the offices of Foreign Minister Ehud Barak, police said. The offending weed was uprooted and police said an investigation had been launched into how it sprouted in a city park.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Two Austrians suspected in Cyprus killing

NICOSIA (AFP) — Two Austrian U.N. peacekeepers serving in Cyprus were under investigation Monday on suspicion of causing the death of a Bulgarian cyclist in a hit-and-run, police said. Canchev Kirkov, 32, a Bulgarian living in Cyprus, had been cycling back to the farm where he worked at around 2 a.m. Monday in the southern coastal area of the island when he was hit from behind by a car. The vehicle left the scene and Kirkov's body was discovered more than an hour later lying in a pool of blood, Cypriot police said. His bike was found in a nearby field. Police said they received a tipoff that the two Austrians had been driving the vehicle responsible for the accident. Broken glass from the car's windshield and headlights were discovered at the scene, they said. The two Austrian troops were apprehended about two hours later sitting in the car near the village of Achina, close to the buffer zone separating the divided island. According to a police spokesman, Sergeant Omar Levtsch, 30, was tested and had an alcohol blood level almost twice the legal limit. Levtsch and his passenger, Private Gunter Pagitz, 21, were believed to be heading back to their UN camp on the Turkish-held side of island, police said.

Lake stops in Egypt for talks with official

CAIRO (AFP) — U.S. National Security Council (NSC) head Anthony Lake held brief talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's chief political advisor while passing through Cairo on Monday, airport sources said. Mr. Lake, and the U.S. Ambassador to Cairo Edward Walker met for a half-hour with Osama Al-Baz in the airport but gave no statement on the content of the talks, the sources said. Mr. Lake was on his way from Paris to Nairobi when he made the stop. The U.S. embassy in Cairo said Mr. Lake's flight stopped in Egypt, which had not been on his itinerary, for refueling.

Egypt, France and Italy in naval manoeuvres

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt, France and Italy are to begin two days of joint naval exercises on Tuesday with 13 vessels including two submarines off Egypt's Mediterranean coast, the state news service MENA said. The three countries completed the first three-day planning stage of the "Cleopatra 96" manoeuvres on Monday with in-port training in electronic warfare and communications, MENA said. Once at sea, the ships will practise submarine detection, attacks on sea and air targets and supply manoeuvres. Italy is joining the annual manoeuvres for the first time with a destroyer and another vessel. France is supplying two destroyers, a sub and a refuelling boat, while Egypt is participating with a destroyer, a sub, four rocket launchers and another vessel, MENA said.

Heat blows off manhole cover, decapitates boy

CAIRO (AFP) — A heat wave in Egypt took its strangest victim when high temperatures caused a chemical explosion in a sewer, blowing off manhole cover which decapitated a 12-year-old boy, police said Monday. Rami Farag Khalaf was working at a garage painting cars in the north Egypt town of Al-Santa when the bizarre accident occurred. Police said paint runoff from the garage reacted with other chemicals in the sewer under the intense heat, building up gas pressure which finally blew the top off the lethal manhole cover, striking Khalaf. Temperatures have reached over degrees Centigrade (104 Fahrenheit) during a heat-wave over the past week in Egypt.

Saudi release \$2m for Palestinians

RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi fundraising committee on Monday ordered \$2 million to be released for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Abdul Rabbim Jamus director of the "People's Committee for Helping the Mujahideen in Palestine," said here it released 7.4 million Saudi riyals (almost \$2 million) to the Palestine National Fund. A total of \$7.8 million has been handed over from the committee to the Palestine Liberation Organisation in the last 11 months. The money is raised through deductions from 200,000 Palestinians living in Saudi Arabia, as well as voluntary contributions from Saudis and foreigners living here. The Saudi government said in September it had given \$100 million to the Palestinian National Authority as its share of support for Palestinian autonomy.

Istanbul assailant injured in bomb attack

ISTANBUL (AFP) — A man was injured when a home-made bomb he wanted to plant in front of a local office of an ultra-nationalist party here went off in his hands early Monday, police said. They said the attacker was hospitalised after the device blew up outside the office of the Nationalist Action Party in the Umraniye district in the European side of Istanbul. The bomb slightly damaged the party office. Police said the attacker was believed to be a member of an illegal leftist organisation.

Electrical fire kills one in North Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — One person was killed and 10 others injured when a fire sparked by electrical wires raged through a north Egyptian village early Monday, police said. The fire broke out in San Aj Gabr village, 85 kilometres north of Cairo, when overhead electrical wires snapped and fell onto the roof of a house, lighting straw stored there, police said. The blaze destroyed a total of 19 homes, leaving one unidentified person dead and injuring 10 others as well as killing a number of cattle, before fire fighters put it out, police said.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:20 Captain Planet
15:40 The Happy Professor
15:40 Scientific Eye
16:10 The Bomb-Mission Show
16:35 ALF
17:00 News Flash
17:02 Ody
17:15 Magazine — La Vie Devant Moi
17:30 Magazine — Moflanti
18:00 Magazine — Savoir Plus Sante
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Magazine — Ushuaia
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Encounter
20:00 Comedy — Home Improvement
20:30 Doc. — Life in the Freezer
21:00 Star Trek
21:10 The News in English
21:25 The Bird and the Beautiful
21:30 Feature film: "Sister Sister"

PRAYER TIMES

04:06 Sunrise
05:33 Sunrise
12:32 Dhuhr
16:12 Asr
19:29 Maghreb
20:57 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedish Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church, Tel.

632785.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.

Church of the Annunciation Tel.

637440.

De La Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

Church of the Annunciation Tel.

623541.

Anglican Church Tel. 652626.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel.

771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel.

775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Armenian International Church Tel.

652526.

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel:

824326.

German-speaking Evangelical

Cooperation Tel. 845457

The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.

The Evangelical Local Church in

Amman Tel. 811295.

English-speaking

Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Depart-

ment of Meteorology.

Khamasini weather conditions

are expected to prevail, so it will be

hot, relatively dry, and dusty with

winds southeasterly moderate. In

Aqaba, winds will be northerly

moderate and seas calm.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Min./Max. temp.

Amman 15/32

Aqaba 21/36

Desert 14/24

Jordan Valley 19/37

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 26, Aqaba 33, Humidity

readings: Amman 44 per cent,

Aqaba 33 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Walid Al Masri 675485

Dr. Khalil Abdo 732920

Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhiab 796448

Dr. Ahmed Mannan 439756

Fordown pharmacy 778336

Al Asma pharmacy 637055

Nairokh pharmacy 623672

Al Salam pharmacy 636781

Yacoub pharmacy 649465

Shmeisani pharmacy 637861

Nairokh pharmacy 623672

Najih pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Muzen Abu Bakr 276852

Aqaba pharmacy (—)

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate

Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 845402



Their Majesties Queen Noor and Queen Sofia of Spain Monday inaugurate an exhibition of contemporary Spanish art at Darat al Funun (photo by Crystal)

Queens Noor, Sofia inaugurate contemporary Spanish art exhibition

AMMAN (J.T.) — Their Majesties Queen Noor and Queen Sofia of Spain inaugurated Monday the Contemporary Spanish art exhibition entitled "From Picasso To Our Present Days" at Darat al Funun, organised by the Spanish embassy, the Instituto Cervantes in Amman and the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation.

The exhibition features the work of 38 contemporary Spanish artists, including Pablo Picasso, Joan Miro and Salvador Dali, from the collection of the Spanish Contemporary Engravings Museum of

Marbella.

According to Suba Shoman of Darat al Funun, the exhibition is "very important because it represents the history of graphic art throughout the 20th century starting from Picasso to the present day."

She added that Jordan received its first graphics printing machine, which is housed at Darat al Funun, three years ago as a present from the National Gallery of Arts.

The exhibition, which will run until the 6th of June, also includes lectures by Jordanian artist Dr. Khalid Khreis in conjunc-

tion with a series of films of Spain's renowned contemporary artists, plus a classical Spanish music concert by La Maestranza.

A Royal Court statement said Queen Noor and Queen Sofia, accompanied by HRH Princess Ghida Talal, were received by Chief Chamberlain HRH Prince Raad Ben Zeid, Princess Majda Raad, Princess Rajwa Ali, Senator Abdul Majid Shoman, Mr. Khalid Shoman and wife of Prime Minister Abdul Karim. Kabariti, Fatina Kabariti.

Contractors complain of foreign competition

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordanian contractors Monday aired their grievances at the start of a seminar organised to promote the contracting business and said foreign competition is one of the main obstacles to the success of the local industry.

Wael Toukan, president of the Jordanian Contractors Association (JCA) told the meeting that the absence of official Jordanian policies concerning contract awards to foreign firms, the lack of incentives for creating contracting corporations, the delay in the settlement of contractors' bills and the absence of quality control of construction materials are all issues that need to be settled for the local contracting

business to succeed.

He also complained that some employers from the public and private sectors accept the lowest bids for construction projects without proper consideration, resulting, he said, in negative consequences for the contracting sector.

The meeting was opened by Minister of Public Works and Housing Abdul Hadi Majali who deputised for HRH Crown Prince Hassan and who said that Jordan was living in the peace era which requires serious efforts towards attaining sustainable development.

He said the contracting sector which accounts for seven per cent of the Kingdom's gross domestic product and which employs 10 per

cent of the country's workforce constitutes the real infrastructure for development.

Pledging full government support for the contracting sector, Mr. Majali said the ministry has created a high level committee to study the grievances of the contractors and overcome problems, and has prepared building codes which are mandatory in Jordan.

Referring to seminar topics, Mr. Majali said they cover such subjects as inputs, legislation and financing, but will not include financial and technical responsibility for any faults committed by contractors, consultants and employers.

He said Jordanian contractors should not be satisfied with gov-

ernment backing and support in the face of foreign competitors, but should raise their standards and performance and prove that their work far exceeds that of foreign contractors.

Husni Abu Ghaida, president of the Jordanian Engineers Association (JEA), addressed the meeting noting that Jordan has 36,000 registered engineers with 250 specialisations who work in Jordan and 60 other countries.

He urged the participants who represent various government firms and the public sector to draw up a set of recommendations that would genuinely promote the contracting profession in Jordan.

Badia centre agrees to host Mideast Node of U.N.U.

AMMAN (J.T.) — Hani Mulki, the Secretary General of the Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST), announced yesterday that the steering committee of the Jordan Badia Research and Development Programme has principally agreed to host the Middle East Regional Node of the United Nations University, at the Safawi Centre.

The HCST currently hosts the Inter-Islamic Water Information Unit, as part of its general policy of providing consultancy services to Islamic, and other developing countries.

Dr. Mulki said the incorporation of the Node within the activities of the HCST qualifies the Safawi Centre to perform a regional role by utilising the U.N. information network.

The projects that have been already implemented are part of an ongoing process for the development of the region, in a manner that serves the human element as well as the land and its resources, the HCST secretary general added.

Dr. Mulki emphasised the fact that research projects are not limited to any specific university or team of researchers, but rather serve as a continuous interaction between researchers and universities, such as the existing relationship between Jordanian universities and eight British counterparts. It is hoped that this interaction will be expanded in the period 1996-2000, under the direct supervision of HCST, and a specialised Jordanian management team based in Safawi, Dr. Mulki said.

Conferees call for efforts to protect water sources in MENA region

AMMAN (J.T.) — Participants in a regional seminar on "The Role of Industry in the Development and Conservation of Water Resources in the Arab Region — Challenges and Prospects" heard calls for increased efforts on the part of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries to protect underground water from pollution, recycle treated water and control the use of pesticides and fertilisers.

The calls were made by the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) which organised the meeting attended by Arab states and international organisations.

In his opening address RSS Vice President Said Alloush noted that water is a scarce commodity in most of the MENA region, and the problem is particularly acute in Jordan, adding that without sufficient and appropriate quality of water, sustainable development is not possible.

Warning that the present water resources in Jordan are endangered because of industrial pollution and excessive pumping of underground water, Dr. Alloush said Jordan is in need of more highly advanced wastewater treatment plants, a national sewerage system, constant control and monitoring of the pesticides and fertilisers used on the land and a clear policy on the various uses of water for different pur-

poses. Perhaps the main challenge to environmental engineers and scientists at the present time is the treatment and disposal of industrial and hazardous wastes, said Dr. Alloush.

He also said that fresh water resources are vulner-

'As the demand for water continues to increase, more attention will be inevitably have to be diverted to demand management and to innovative technologies which could be employed for the augmentation of water supplies.'

able to several threats that can diminish their value, and some are subject to depletion, deterioration and negative changes in water quality due to agricultural activities and overpumping and industrial pollution.

UNIDO representative Morteza Abtahi noted in his speech that "the new momentum of the peace process in the Middle East signals the beginning of recovery and growth for the nations of the region and opens the door for intensified business activity and greater regional cooperation."

He also noted that "the

drive into the new era will be spearheaded by both the industrial and private sectors of these countries as they grasp the opportunity of an improving environment to consolidate, grow and prosper."

According to the UNIDO representative, privatisation, competitiveness, job creation and environmental protection and pollution control constitute the main challenges for these countries in the new era.

But he said that the last in the list perhaps poses the most significant challenge because pollution to water resources through industry and other factors impedes development noting that UNIDO has launched large-scale projects in the MENA region to help protect water from pollution.

"As the demand for water continues to increase, more attention will be inevitably have to be diverted to demand management and to innovative technologies which could be employed for the augmentation of water supplies. Industry will play a vital role in this regard," said Abtahi.

The three-day workshop aims to reassess the current status of the region's water resources in relation to growing demand and identify priority issues, review current approaches viewed worldwide on the use, development and management of water resources and also to define the role of industry in the development and conservation of water resources.

Court postponed case on attack on French envoy

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The trial of two Jordanians involved in an attack on a French diplomat in Wadi Mujib in Feb. 1995 and accused of sabotage, was postponed by the State Security Court because of changes to the tribunal charged with the case.

Newly-appointed Judge Yousef Fauri, who was named to the case when former presiding Judge Hafez Amin stepped down, set May 21, to continue hearing the case of the two suspects on charges of plotting to carry out extremist attacks, possessing illegal arms and explosives, and manufacturing hand-made

explosives.

Salem Abdullah Jaradat and Ahmad Qassem, both 22, are currently being tried at the Criminal Court on charges of shooting and wounding French diplomat Gil Hein after a police chase in which the suspects exchanged fire with the patrolmen in Wadi Mujib.

Last week, Second Lieutenant Mohammad Zubeiri, 28, of the Thiban Police Station in Madaba, told the court that he did not see the two suspects shooting at Mr. Hein or at the police patrol that was chasing them.

New presiding Judge Abdul Rahman Tawfiq informed the prosecution and the defendant that the Pub-

lic Security Department (PSD) Saturday informed the court that the testimonies of Mr. Hein, 33, a former second secretary at the French Embassy, and his wife Florence, 31, will be included in the prosecution's file, as both victims and witnesses are in France.

According to defence attorney Saleh Armouti, the French couple said in their testimonies that the two suspects did not shoot at them or intend to hurt them.

According to the prosecution, the suspects came across the French couple, who had stopped their car at a scenic spot in Wadi Mujib. The suspects tried to force the couple to get into the car and Mr. Hein strug-

gled with the two men.

A police patrol noticed the quarrel and came to the rescue, said the prosecution charge sheet. Mr. Hein was shot in the chest and foot after police and the attackers exchanged

Mr. Armouti told the Jordan Times Monday that the French couple dropped charges against the suspects. Recently, the Court of Cassation ordered to split the trial approving a request by the State Security prosecutor general to split the trial because attempted murder was not within his jurisdiction.

The Criminal Court set May 15 to hear three other patrolmen involved in the chase.

BYU Orchestra captivates audience

By Nathan Morley
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Brigham Young University Chamber Orchestra made its performance at the Royal Cultural Centre in Amman a memorable one.

The 45 member orchestra from Provo, Utah in the Western United States, began their performance with the Jordanian national anthem, followed by a medley of recent and classical pieces from European and American composers.

The group's presentation of American composer Aaron Copland's "Appalachian Spring" was stirring and heartfelt, while "The Three Corners of the World" written by Spanish composer Manuel de Falla, was lively and festive. Samuel Barber's "Adagio for Strings" brought about a thoughtful, contemplative mood.

The evening ended with an appreciative standing ovation and an encore num-

ber.

In addition to its performance at the Royal Cultural Centre, the Brigham Young University Chamber Orchestra played in local schools and conducted brief clinics for interested students.

The orchestra's visit to Amman was sponsored by the National Music Conservatory and the Amman Marriott Hotel under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein, and is one of many stops on its 1996 tour of the Middle East.

The group has played in Jerusalem, the West Bank, Israel, Jordan, and will complete its regional visit with several shows in Egypt. "We have been so warmly received by the Jordanian people," said Dr. Clyn Barus, the orchestra's conductor. "Our stay in Amman has been a fantastic experience. We are honoured that we had the opportunity to perform here."

Municipality to start Mahatta camp development project

AMMAN (Petra) — Amman Municipality Monday announced the completion of demographic, social and technical plans for the development of Mahatta Palestine Refugee Camp and is preparing to carry out development work there.

Deputy Mayor Falaq Emoush said plans aim at providing the densely populated camp with basic services which it still lacks for its growing population.

This is one of several development schemes under way by Amman Municipality to develop what Mr. Emoush called the less fortunate districts of the capital and provide them with the essential services to turn them into healthier places and more convenient for their residents.

The number residents of the Mahatta camp which stands on 84 dunums is estimated at 5,000, said Mr. Emoush. He said they do not own the land but were temporarily housed there after coming from other parts of the Kingdom or following their displacement from the West Bank, according to Mr. Emoush.

He said the municipality has already opened a new road and improved the condition of the inner roads to facilitate emergency vehicles such as fire engines

and created open yards and children's recreational zones within the camp's perimeter.

Engineers working for the municipality had suggested two options: demolishing the entire camp and offering the residents plots of land owned by the municipality where they could build their own homes, or demolishing only dilapidated parts, restoring the rest of the homes and carrying out modernisation plans.

The municipal council decided on the second option.

According to Mr. Emoush, the Mahatta Camp's development project is also necessary to bring the camp in harmony with its neighbouring areas which enjoy regular services.

He said that the municipality has chosen the following less fortunate districts for development in addition to Mahatta Camp: Qaisieh, Wadi Abdoun, Wadi Haddadeh, Lawzieh, Mohammad Amin Camp, Abu Alia, Tafaleh District, the slopes of Jabal Taj and Jabal Nuzha, Um Nowara, and Wadi Marbat.



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MUSICAL PLAY

*Jordanian grand musical play "Meadows of Dreams" (on children's rights) at Al Hassan Bin Talal Auditorium, University of Jordan at 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

FILM

*"Salvador Dali" (in Spanish with commentary in Arabic by Dr. Khalid Khreis) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITION

*Products of Noor Al Hussein Foundation at the Royal Cultural Centre, until May 16.

India's 'third front' rules out coalition with Congress

NEW DELHI (AFP) — An alliance of centrist and leftist Indian parties Monday ruled out participation in a coalition government with the Congress (I) Party of outgoing Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao.

The decision was announced separately by the centrist Janata Dal (People's Party) and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), the two main components of the alliance known as the National Front-Left Front (NF-LF).

In a statement, the CPI-M said it was ready to support a government that did not include the Congress or the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) but would not be a member of a coalition.

Prakash Karat, a politburo member of the CPI-M, said the party had passed a resolution at a marathon meeting of its central committee here Monday supporting the formation of a "non-Congress, non-BJP government."

"All efforts to create such a government are on," he said. "We will extend all support to such a government from outside."

The Congress Party, ousted from power in general elections, had said Sunday that it would support the NF-LF or join a coalition with it in a bid to thwart the BJP from coming to power.

Prime Minister Rao had been in touch with leaders of the alliance to explore the possibility of forming a coalition.

Janata Dal spokesman S. Jaipal Reddy said the party leadership had decided that any coalition government should comprise only components of the NF-LF and exclude the Congress.

He said formal consultations with the Congress Party to strike a deal for its support for a NF-LF government would begin after consultations between leaders of the alliance.

Mr. Reddy said the NF-LF was confident of being able to arrive at a consensus choice for its leader, saying "there is no dearth of talent but only excess of it in our group."

Both the BJP and NF-LF said Monday they would attract enough support to cobble together a majority in the hung parliament which emerged from inconclusive general elections.

But neither has shown the arithmetic which would prove a viable majority, although they were lobbying hard Monday.

President Shankar Dayal Sharma, whose duties are largely ceremonial, has the task of appointing the prime minister.

He said Saturday he would wait until the latest ballots were counted. The Election Commission said it would notify Mr. Sharma of the results once counting was over, probably either Monday or Tuesday.

The constitution provides Mr. Sharma no clear guidelines for his choice. Some experts said he should call BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee, as his party won the largest number

of seats. Others said Mr. Sharma, a legal expert, should ask the BJP and NF-LF to prove on paper how many votes they could command in the 545-member lower house.

Congress and NF-LF officials said they expected Mr. Sharma to appoint a new prime minister Tuesday or Wednesday.

With 533 results declared, the BJP and its allies had 187 seats, ahead of Congress with 138 and the NF-LF with 116. Regional parties, small groups and independents controlled 92 seats, giving them the critical bargaining lever.

The BJP lost a crucial bloc of seats Monday when the regional DMK party, based in the southern state of Tamil Nadu and winner of 17 seats, said it would not support it.

But DMK leader M. Karunanidhi, who fell out with the NF-LF's Janata Dal several years ago, refused to pledge his support to the left-wing coalition.

Bitter adversaries during general elections, the defeated Congress and the NF-LF edged inexorably towards each other. The political magnet was their shared opposition to the BJP's promotion of Hindu values, which they call anti-Muslim.

But Congress and the NF-LF had yet to iron out ideological differences, including whether caretaker Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's open-market economic policies would be pursued.

Communist leader Jyoti Basu, 81, long-time chief minister of West Bengal state, was expected to emerge as the NF-LF's compromise prime ministerial candidate. His Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) was meeting to decide strategy.

Mr. Basu's assets, according to Congress spokesman Vithal Gadgil, include experience in managing coalitions in his state and a clean reputation.

Mr. Gadgil told Reuters he expected his party, which suffered an unprecedented defeat in the polls, to support the NF-LF without joining its government.

He said Congress, which unanimously re-elected Mr. Rao as its parliamentary party chief Sunday, would demand the left-wing coalition support economic liberalisation.

But a member of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) politburo, Sita Ram Yechury, said the NF-LF would accept no conditions. "Congress has to support us unconditionally," he told Reuters before a meeting of CPM leaders Monday.

The BJP belittled attempts by its rivals to convince Mr. Sharma to ignore custom and refrain from asking the largest party in parliament to govern the country.

"We are the single largest party. We are confident that the BJP will turn to the single largest party," senior BJP leader Jaswant Singh told Reuters.

Vietnam appeals for humanitarian treatment in Hong Kong camps

HANOI (AFP) — Vietnam appealed Monday for boatpeople in Hong Kong to be treated in a humanitarian way after violent clashes and a mass break-out from a camp for boat people there.

The Foreign Ministry issued a routine reply to questions on violence that has struck camps across the region.

"While waiting for repatriation, Vietnamese should be treated in a humanitarian manner and their dignity should be respected," a spokesman said.

Scores of people were injured and buildings set alight when more than 100 inmates of the Whitehead Camp in Hong Kong escaped Saturday. Two days of violent protests against forced repatriation left considerable damage.

Police fired hundreds of rounds of tear gas to quell protests in which buildings holding official records were burned down in what Hong Kong authorities said was an attempt to hinder repatriations.

In Hong Kong, independent monitors of the camp violence criticised the use of heavy use of tear gas.

"Once the initial salvos were fired, there should have been a pause period to warn

people that tear gas will be continued if the situation does not improve," monitors from Oxfam and Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) and other groups, said in their report.

The MSF delegate, Nadine De Lamotte, voiced concern at "the large scale use of tear gas on vulnerable people in the detention camp, especially its effects on the health of women and children and the resulting psychological trauma."

Chairman of Hong Kong's Prison Officers Association Steven Wong said officers were unprepared for the magnitude of the riot and breakout.

"In such violent situations I think the government should give a lot more manpower and resources to our department."

The Hong Kong government has said it will speed up the repatriation of the 18,000 Vietnamese in camps. The majority have been refused refugee status.

The Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokesman said Hanoi would cooperate with the United Nations and governments around the region to resolve the boatpeople problem.



More than 600 local residents living nearby demonstrate outside Hong Kong's Whitehead Vietnamese boatpeople camp against last Friday's violence and mass breakout of boatpeople inside the camp. The riot was one of the worst in the colony's penal institutions in years (Reuters photo)

Clinton aides put pressure on IRA to renew truce

LONDON (R) — Senior aides of U.S. President Bill Clinton urged the IRA Monday to renew its ceasefire as Dublin indicated the guerrillas might be about to declare a new truce in their fight against British rule in Northern Ireland.

One Clinton adviser said the president was willing to act as an "honest broker" if the Irish Republican Army (IRA) stopped the violence.

"The Clinton White House is committed to staying actively involved in the peace process and is basically guaranteeing to be an honest broker in the process if the IRA will once again call a ceasefire," Peter King, an adviser to Mr. Clinton on Northern Ireland, told London News Radio.

Senator Christopher Dodd, chairman of the U.S. Democratic Party and head of Mr. Clinton's re-election campaign, told BBC Radio that Gerry Adams, leader of the IRA's political wing, Sinn Fein, should not be allowed into the U.S. until peace is restored.

"Until this ceasefire is resumed I would strongly urge the president not to be extending visas to Gerry Adams," Sen. Dodd said in a BBC Radio interview.

In Brussels, Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring told reporters: "All the indications are the Irish process (is) heading for another ceasefire."

Leading Irish Republican Martin McGuinness said Sunday the IRA was "open to persuasion" on renewing its truce.

Mr. Spring, in Brussels for a meeting of European Union foreign ministers, said he was pleased with the renewed interest shown by the United States in the peace process.

Asked whether Washington should grant visas to Mr. Adams, he said that was a matter for the U.S. administration.

The IRA, which wants to end British rule in Northern Ireland, broke a 17-month ceasefire in January.



A Taiwanese survivor of a Mount Everest blizzard, Ming-Ho Gau, is pulled from a Nepalese Army helicopter after being rescued from Everest's 6,400 metre-high base camp (Reuters photo)

Nepali helicopter rescues U.S., Taiwan climbers from Everest

KATHMANDU (R) — A Nepali army helicopter rescued an American and a Taiwanese climber, both seriously frostbitten, from Mount Everest Monday, rescue officials said.

"There was no place for us to land but somehow, we managed and picked up the climbers," said Lieutenant Colonel Madan K.C., the pilot of the army helicopter that flew the mountaineers to Kathmandu, capital of the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal.

Rescue officials said American Seaborn Beck Weathers and Taiwan's Ming-Ho Gau were rescued from an altitude of 19,100 feet (5,822 metres) Monday morning after a weekend blizzard struck the world's highest peak.

Mr. Weathers, a 49-year-old pathologist from Dallas, was reported missing while returning after he scaled the 8,848-metre (29,028-ft) peak Friday.

The American, climbing with a New Zealand expedition, almost managed to reach a lower camp Sunday.

"He was lying on the snow when we picked him up from just above Camp 1," Col. Madan K.C. told Reuters.

Mr. Gau, a 47-year-old photographer from Taipei who led a five-member expedition, also scaled the summit Friday.

Both climbers were rushed from the airport to a private nursing home, whose officials declined to comment on their conditions.

But rescuers said they were both in critical condition.

"He has serious frost bite on his arms, face and feet," Col. Madan K.C. said of Mr. Weathers. "It is very terrible."

The climber could not walk and was carried on a stretcher, witnesses said.

Col. Madan K.C. said other mountaineers were dragging Mr. Gau to safety when the rescue team arrived. He said there were about 50 climbers on the mountain.

"They are in good shape and were waving at us when the helicopter went," he said.

Nepali officials said Monday rescue workers were searching for survivors in rural Nepal after a weekend hurricane killed more than 20 people and uprooted trees and telephone cables.

The climber could not walk and was carried on a



A Mount Everest blizzard survivor from the United States, Seaborn Beck Weathers from Dallas, talks to journalists after being rescued from Everest's 6,400 metre-high base camp. Climbers from New Zealand, Australia, the United States and South Africa have survived some of the area's most extreme weather in decades, while a Japanese climber and others have died recently in the extreme conditions (Reuters photo)

"I had never ever seen such a big hurricane in 40 years of my life," said Bi-ood Khanal, an official in the eastern town of Jhapa, where 15 people were killed.

The state-run RSS news agency said 24 people had been killed and 19 injured in the storm. Officials said they expected the toll to rise when communication links with remote villages were restored.

"In some cases, roofs of houses were blown as far away as 500 metres," a Jhapa resident told Reuters.

Conservatives win control in French Polynesia elections

PAPEETE, French Polynesia (R) — Allies of President Jacques Chirac gained control of French Polynesia's territorial assembly but separatists also made strong election gains, officials said Monday.

Near-final results of Sunday's ballot announced by the government showed the party of Mr. Chirac's right-wing ally Gaston Flosse won 22 of the assembly's 41 seats despite France's six recent nuclear tests in the archipelago.

Mr. Flosse's Taharua Huiaraatira party held 18 seats in the outgoing assembly, which runs the islands' day-to-day affairs.

Oscar Temaru's pro-independence party, Tavini Huiaraatira, which led protests against the nuclear tests, also picked up strength, boosting its seats from six to 10.

The nine other seats went to minor parties favouring continued links with France which is to give the islands a 10-year aid programme following the end of nuclear tests.

The voters were scattered over 130 tropical islands and coral atolls, part of what the late General Charles De Gaulle nostalgically called "the last specks of dust of our empire."

Some went to the polling booths by canoe.

The elections went off without incident and more than 60 per cent of voters had cast their ballots before the polls closed at 6 p.m. Sunday (0400 GMT Monday).

Mr. Chirac's programme of six nuclear tests at the Mururoa and Fangataufa atolls, which ended in January, caused outrage

around the world.

French Polynesia political leaders said the tests did not play a decisive role in the election campaign though anti-nuclear, pro-independence riots after the first of the six blasts on Sept. 6 probably alienated moderates from Mr. Temaru.

The cost of riot damage, including a wrecked airport, was more than 200 million francs (\$40 million).

Mr. Temaru won four seats in the last assembly elections in 1991 and picked up another two seats through defections.

Election debate this time centred on how to best spend a 10-year aid package granted by Paris to make up for a shortfall in the military's nuclear spending worth an annual 990 million francs (\$194 million).

The funds are intended to help the islands shift to a post-atomic era of tourism, fishing and farming.

Mr. Flosse, 64, who refers to Chirac as "my brother" and has pledged to keep Polynesia "in the heart of the French Republic," has also won greater autonomy for the islands, helping to counter the pro-independence argument.

On the question of independence, the new assembly is expected to have at least 30 votes in support of continued strong ties with mainland France.

French Polynesia's industries include tourism, pearl farming and flower exports but the islands suffer high unemployment and have few natural resources.

Villagers pee outdoors to save lake life

STOCKHOLM (R) — The villagers of Stigromta, southern Sweden, answered the call of nature wherever the fancy took them Sunday, staging pee outdoors day in a symbolic environmental protest action. The Swedish News Agency (TT) reported that some 2,000 men, women and children — including the village priest — joined in the mass public urination to draw attention to the dying ecosystem of their lake. A local environmental group, Save The Halbo Lake, says fish and plant life in the lake are being wiped out by nitrogen pumped into it from a sewage treatment works. The state of the ecosystem in and around Stigromta Sunday was not known.

Rats in space have normal pregnancies

WASHINGTON (R) — In a finding that may hold hope for future human colonies in space, pregnant rats aboard the space shuttle deliver normal-sized "babies" when they return to earth, scientists said. While far from establishing that normal human pregnancies can be carried out in space, the experiment did show that rat pregnancy can be maintained in zero gravity. The rats were already pregnant when they travelled into space. The results of the study by researchers at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Centre were presented at the American Pediatric Society meeting in Washington. Dr. Steve Hoath, a member of the research team that focused on skin growth in the rat babies, said the findings were the opposite of what he had expected. "We found that the foetuses from the animals who spent half their pregnancy in space grew faster" than the earthbound control rats, he said in a telephone interview. There were also fewer foetal deaths or miscarriages than he expected. Astronauts in space are known to lose calcium, and Dr. Hoath believes that the same thing happened to the mother rats — except that the calcium ended up going into the foetuses and making them stronger. "We know that a foetus is a very effective parasite," said Dr. Hoath, who hopes to study skin growth on human astronauts. He likened skin to a natural "biological spacesuit." Human space pregnancy, however, is off limits for study for the time being. "The last thing a female astronaut has to do," he said, "is take a pregnancy test."

Germany makes rape within marriage a crime

BONN (R) — Germany has made it a crime to commit rape within marriage after years of debating the issue. Chancellor Helmut Kohl's coalition pushed a bill through the lower house, the Bundestag, to outlaw rape of a wife by a husband. There were 318 votes in favour, 306 against and two abstentions. The bill won all-party support in principle. All parties agreed that it was wrong to view rape within marriage as just a case of a man taking what was his by right. But opposition Social Democrats and the environmental Greens criticised the final draft because it provided for charges against a husband to be dropped if his wife changed her testimony. Claudia Nolte, the minister for family affairs, defended the law. Ms. Nolte said the wife would be able to withdraw her testimony in person before a state prosecutor and that even if she was not under any apparent pressure the prosecutor would make the final decision. The prosecutor's decision would take into consideration whether the husband had a history of violence, Ms. Nolte said.

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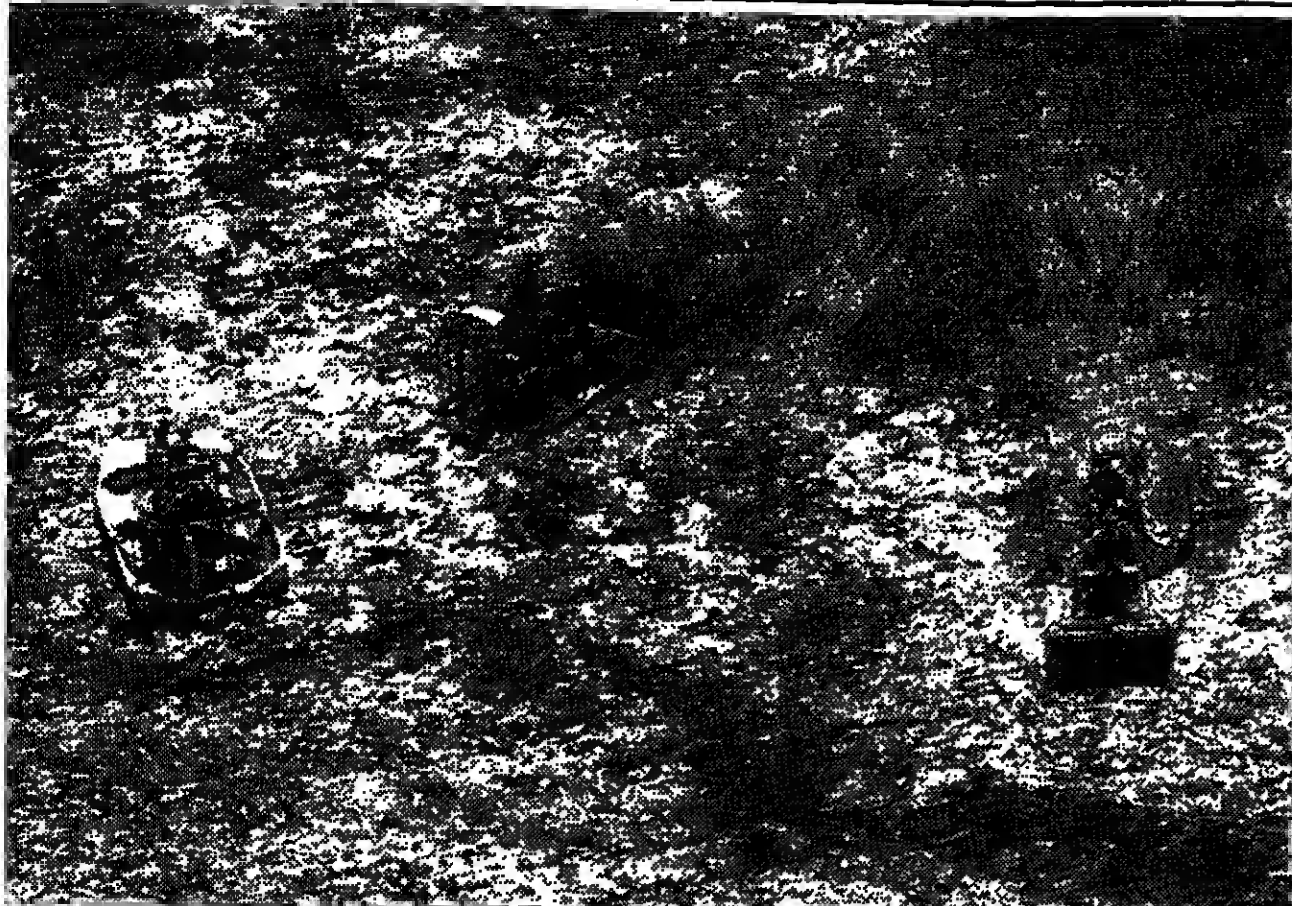
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Airboats carry federal investigators looking for evidence near the crash site of ValuJet Flight 592 in the Everglades. The site of the May 11 crash is only accessible by airboat or helicopter. No survivors have been found (Renter photo)

DC-9 wreckage, passengers buried in Florida Everglades

MIAMI (R) — The swampland of the Florida Everglades stubbornly refused to give up its secrets about the fatal flight of a ValuJet DC-9, forcing searchers to use high-tech equipment Monday to locate wreckage entombed in thick mud.

Federal aviation officials, who have investigated fatal crashes on steep mountains and in winter snowstorms, said the site where all 109 passengers and crew perished presented them with the most difficult search conditions ever.

On Sunday evening, the first human remains were recovered by teams using airboats. Miami's WSVN-TV station reported. Witnesses at the scene told Reuters they saw body bags loaded into vans bound for the county morgue, but a spokeswoman for the medical examiner said she could not confirm the report.

The DC-9 jet shattered on impact when it slammed into the Everglades nose-first Saturday afternoon. Thick mud as deep as 30 feet (9.144 metres) sucked in much of the wreckage, and razor-sharp sawgrass covered part of the area.

Federal officials said they would launch an intense scrutiny of ValuJet's safety and maintenance practices. Federal Aviation Administration inspectors will ride in ValuJet cockpits, check aircraft and audit the carrier's quality control programme during the next 30 days.

ValuJet, founded in late 1993 as a low-priced carrier, has drawn criticism for growing too rapidly. The airline's president, Lewis Jordan, has adamantly denied ValuJet's expansion has been at the expense of safety.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said late Sunday it had called in navy sonar experts to use high-tech equipment to find the jet's flight data recorder.

The jet's two engines and small pieces of debris were recovered from the alligator-infested waters about 15 miles (24 kilometres) northwest of Miami.

Divers were sent into the murky, fuel-soaked water for 15-minute shifts Sunday, using their hands to feel for any debris. Small teams of searchers climbed out of their airboats and held hands as they carefully stepped through the swamp land looking for human remains.

"This is the most difficult scene that they have ever encountered for the recovery of the aircraft," said Robert Francis, NTSB vice chairman. "It is very, very tough to figure out how we're going to get the aircraft out of the swamp."

Transportation Secretary Federico Pena said he met with the victims' relatives, some of whom wanted to visit the muddy, remote place where the plane crashed.

"It is still a very dangerous site. It is difficult to reach, but I very much understand the need of family members to go out there," Mr. Pena said.

Lamar Oliver, the 12-year-old son of passenger Wilhelmina Oliver, said his mother was en route to Atlanta to see another son graduate. "We are very sad. We are angry," the boy told reporters, his voice shaking with emotion. "My mom was a nice person. We loved her very much."

Federal officials said it was far too soon to suggest a possible cause of the crash, but said the pilot told the air traffic control tower that smoke had filled the cabin and the cockpit before the crash.

The pilot, Capt. Candelyn Kubeck, had nearly 9,000 hours of total flying experience. She was married to another pilot, who flies for America West Airline.

U.S., Japan and South Korea agree to hold out for inter-Korean talks

SEOUL (AFP) — The United States, Japan and South Korea Monday agreed to avoid any hasty improvement in relations with North Korea until the Communist nation agrees on talks to secure a lasting peace, officials said.

"But there was agreement on the need for humanitarian assistance to North Korea along with diplomatic efforts to induce the North to agree to the (peace) proposal," a South Korean Foreign Ministry official told AFP.

The agreement came during a two-day consultative meeting between Washington, Seoul and Tokyo, begun Monday on the southern island of Cheju, he said.

The meeting was led by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord, Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Yanai Shunji and South Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Chung Tae-ik.

The U.S. side was optimistic about North Korea's response to the proposal for four-way talks made last month by U.S. and South Korean leaders, saying all signs so far have been "so encouraging," the official said.

The new peace overture calls for the two Koreas to discuss a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula, which has been divided under a fragile 1953 armistice, with Washington and Beijing playing supporting roles.

So far, the North has neither agreed or refused, saying only that it is studying the overture.

"The U.S. side agreed a cautious approach is needed in handling the North before it accepts the proposal," the official said.

Specific incentive or appeasement measures, such as further U.S. steps to ease economic sanctions on Pyongyang, were not

discussed Monday, he said, adding that Japan had promised to slow its push for rapprochement with Pyongyang.

"Carrots would only provoke the North," another ministry official in Cheju told South Korean reporters.

"Easing economic sanctions, providing additional rice, economic aid to the North and other issues can be discussed once the North comes forward to accept the four-party meeting," he said.

The three sides also agreed that North Korea's leadership headed by Kim Jong-il is stable despite "signs of greater military influence," he said.

Earlier triangular consultations in Hawaii in January paved the way for Washington to go ahead with negotiations with North Korea on its controversial missile sales and the remains of American soldiers killed in the Korean War.

U.S. officials have also been privately discussing easing economic sanctions on North Korea. But State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said last week Washington would not seek an early decision.

"We will not take any steps to do so right now. I think we need to certainly have further talks and see further improvement in the relationship before that can happen," Mr. Burns said.

South Korea has been under pressure to make appeasement gestures, including rice aid, to the economically embattled North.

Inter-Korean rice talks broke down last September after South Korea completed the delivery of 150,000 tonnes of rice to ease the North's food crisis.

Two requests in March by the North to restart the rice talks were rejected out of hand by Seoul.

Khan's party to wait for Pakistani elections to tackle political system

KARACHI (AFP) — Cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan said here Monday that his party aims to reshape Pakistan's political system but only through legitimate parliamentary channels.

Addressing the Karachi Bar Association, he said his three-week-old Tehreek-i-Insaf (Movement For Justice) wanted to end corruption and develop a leadership with a living standard similar to that of most Pakistanis.

The movement was preparing for general elections to be held when the current National Assembly expires in 1998, he said. "Holding of mid-term election does not suit

us."

Main opposition leader and former Premier Nawaz Sharif has been pressing for early polls in the country.

Mr. Khan, who last week told reporters his party would sweep elections, said: "We would come into the assembly after contesting elections." Then, with a clear majority in the parliament, the party would work to change the whole system, ensuring justice in all spheres of life, he said.

Mr. Khan, 43, said that he was never interested in politics but that the dire situation in the country created by the current crop of politicians left him no choice.

Jospin accuses Chirac of 'trickery, failure'

PARIS (R) — Opposition Socialist leader Lionel Jospin accused French President Jacques Chirac Sunday of "trickery and failure" in his first year in office.

He also vowed to try to halt European Union deregulation of public services like telecommunications and do more to create jobs if his party won the next legislative elections in 1998.

Mr. Jospin, defeated by conservative Chirac in the presidential run-off on May 7, 1995, told TFI television that the president's actions in his first seven years could be summed up in two words as "trickery and failure."

He said trickery lay in the gulf between Mr. Chirac's promises of jobs and actual policies of austerity cuts. The failure was that unemployment had risen and taxes had increased.

Mr. Jospin, whose party was routed in 1993 in the last legislative elections, said the Socialists would be ready to govern if elected in 1998.

He said a Socialist government would seek to slam the brakes on EU policies of opening up public services such as telecommunications and electricity markets to competition, saying they were helping the EU's U.S. competitors.

"By building this European market, we're offering it to U.S. companies. We must pursue policies for growth, common industry and arms policies... so that Europe can exist and defend itself on the international scene," he said.

Yeltsin gets boost in polls ahead of presidential election

MOSCOW (R) — Three new opinion polls suggested that President Boris Yeltsin was now slightly ahead of Communist challenger Gennady Zyuganov in the race to become Russia's next president.

The three surveys released Sunday, five weeks before the June 16 election, gave Mr. Yeltsin leads over Mr. Zyuganov ranging from 0.5 percentage points to four percentage points.

Although such polls are mistrusted in Russia and others last week put Mr. Zyuganov ahead, the findings confirmed a trend showing Mr. Yeltsin making up ground in the last two months and indicated that he could win a second-round run-off against the Communist.

The results should encourage the 65-year-old Kremlin leader as he tries to unite other "democratic" presidential candidates in an anti-Communist alliance.

His efforts face major hurdles. Liberal candidate Grigory Yavlinsky said it would be hard to reach agreement with Mr. Yeltsin and centrist Alexander Lebed ruled out joining such an alliance altogether.

"Unfortunately I cannot join this coalition for the simple reason that I do not think the existing government is any better than the Communists," Lebed, a former army general, told the Izvestia newspaper.

Mr. Yavlinsky gave a cold reception to Mr. Yeltsin's suggestion during a weekend campaign trip that they were uniting. The liberal economist said Mr. Yeltsin had "no basis for making statements of that sort."

The new opinion polls also offered some comfort to Yeltsin aides who showed signs of increasing nervousness last week. One even suggested he favoured postponing the election.

The Vtsiom Research Group, in a survey of 1,600 people, said 28 per cent of respondents who planned to vote would opt for Mr. Yeltsin and 27 per cent for Mr. Zyuganov.

The Ramir Agency, part of the Gallup Group, gave 29 per cent of the vote to Mr. Yeltsin and 25 per cent to Mr. Zyuganov. The third poll, conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation, gave Mr. Yeltsin 25 per cent support and Mr. Zyuganov 24.5 per cent.

In projected second round voting, Vtsiom put Mr. Yeltsin's support at 37 per cent to Mr. Zyuganov's 31 per cent. Ramir gave Mr. Yeltsin 41 per cent to Mr. Zyuganov's 33 per cent and the Public Opinion Foundation gave Mr. Yeltsin 39.2 per cent to Mr. Zyuganov's 31.7.

The television presenters who announced the figures said they should be treated with caution.

"The results of public opinion polls, particularly in our country, are always more favourable for the current authorities," said Nikolai Svanidze, a presenter and commentator for Russian State Television (RTR).

Alexander Gerasimov, a commentator for the independent NTV channel, said: "Yeltsin's lead is purely symbolic."

Mr. Yeltsin played an election gambit at the weekend by confirming that he planned to visit Chechnya this month to try to end 17 months of fighting over the southern region's drive for independence.

He has identified the conflict, which has killed more than 30,000 people, as an obstacle to his re-election on June 16. Tensions remain high in Chechnya, where the Russian forces sent in by Mr. Yeltsin in December 1994, still face problems from the outnumbered and outgunned rebels. Most rebels are now based in southern mountains but often stage raids in the lowlands.

One Russian serviceman was killed and four were wounded when rebels ambushed a column of troops in the capital Grozny Sunday and three more were hurt when a Russian armoured vehicle hit a mine in the city.

Russians claim 30 Chechen separatists killed

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Russian forces in Chechnya said Monday they had killed 30 separatist guerrillas in the mountainous south of the rebel Caucasus republic, while admitting to three dead and several wounded among their own troops.

An army command spokesman in the Chechen capital Grozny said that the group of fighters had been wiped out south of the southern mountain centre of Shanoi, ITAR-TASS news agency said.

There was no independent confirmation of what would be an unusually large number of Chechens — who have been battling Russian forces since December 1994 — to die in one clash. Russian officials regularly give inaccurate casualty tolls.

Interfax News Agency quoted unnamed sources as saying that three Russian soldiers were killed and six were wounded in fighting around the southern town of Urus Martan.

Another two soldiers were wounded in a rebel attack in the southern mountain village of Kharsenoi and another two by a landmine in the southwest of the tiny republic, Interfax said.

Echo Moscow radio reported that about 4,000 people were holding a demonstration in Urus Martan, where civilians have been targeted in three Russian air raids in the last week. It was unclear what the demonstrators were demanding.

The local, pro-Russian administration said it would institute house-to-house checks to persuade the Russians that the town is not sheltering rebel fighters.

In Grozny, which is controlled by Russian troops, but constantly infil-

trated by rebel commandos, heavy firefights broke out in several neighbourhoods overnight, Interfax quoted military officials as saying.

The continued fighting comes ahead of a possible visit this week by President Boris Yeltsin, who is seeking re-election on June 16 and has repeatedly told voters that the war in Chechnya is over.

Mr. Yeltsin said he wants to launch negotiations between Moscow, the local Russian-installed Chechen government and the separatist government during his visit.

But the rebels have rejected any talks involving the local Russian authorities, saying they head an independent state and can only negotiate directly with Moscow.

Late Sunday, rebel commander Shamil Basayev said that he would not sit down at a negotiating table with President Yeltsin, calling Mr. Yeltsin's offer of negotiations an election publicity stunt, Radio Russia, monitored by the BBC in London, reported.

Chechen commanders say that negotiations can only be carried out by the separatist president, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, who took over late last month after the first rebel chechen president, Dzhokhar Dudayev, was killed in a Russian rocket attack.

TASS said about 700 Russian troops were conducting an operation early Monday to sweep rebels out from the Staropromyslov district of Grozny.

The level of violence highlighted the problems facing Russian troops in Chechnya despite tighter security before Mr. Yeltsin's planned visit.

The president, clearly hoping a morale-boosting trip to Russian troops

lies.

Concerned by rising crime, the EU paper also calls for action to combat organised crime.

It says priority should be given to dealing with refugees and displaced persons to fight illegal immigration.

On security and foreign policy, the EU says it wants to develop more contacts with Moscow in fields ranging from disarmament to arms export controls.

The plan was approved by EU foreign ministers in the morning, but officials said ministers were likely to discuss the situation in Russia in the afternoon.

"The plan is a practical checklist of what is needed to keep Russia on track," the British official said.

EU foreign ministers back Russian action plan

BRUSSELS (R) — European Union foreign ministers, anxiously hoping for the reelection of Russian President Boris Yeltsin next month, approved a plan Monday to help keep Moscow on track for economic and political reform.

The plan commits the 15-member EU to a wide range of actions, from working to bring Russia into the World Trade Organisation to forging cultural links.

Horried at the possibility of Mr. Yeltsin losing the June election to Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, the EU hopes the plan will convince Russians of Western support for reform.

"The timing is designed to coincide with the (June) elections," one EU government official said. "You can read the message they are sending from the

timing."

Publicly, the EU says the plan is "about policies, not personalities". Like much of the West, the EU has placed almost all its hopes for Russia on Mr. Yeltsin, only to see him trailing Mr. Zyuganov in opinion polls.

The EU has few options other than to urge Moscow to continue reforms. "The objective is not to support Yeltsin," a British official said. "The object is to support the country."

The plan includes helping democratic reforms, economic cooperation, cooperation in justice and home affairs, security and foreign policy.

On the economic front, the plan says the EU will help develop trade links and promote economic regional cooperation. It promises to help Moscow modernise production and manufacturing and encouraging anti-monopo-

Italy's leaders play down northern separatist threat

ROME (AFP) — Italian politicians Monday played down secession threats by Northern League leader Umberto Bossi after he set up his own "government" and called for a separate northern state of Padania.

Romano Prodi, the future prime minister and leader of the centre-left Olive Tree Coalition that won the April 21 election said he did not take the threat seriously.

He was backed by other leading Rome politicians who dubbed Mr. Bossi's move a sideshow aimed only at attracting publicity.

"A lot of others in the past have formed shadow governments and if the League wants to organise itself that way it can. It will not be a government invested with popular support and so it is of no concern to me," said Mr. Prodi.

Speaking after Mr. Bossi's announcement Sunday, Mr. Prodi said: "I am myself an animal of the northeast, where I was born, where I was raised... I know exactly what the people of the north want, an efficient state, services that work, roads, transport and the chance to trade with the rest of the world."

Alfredo Biondi, a former justice minister in centre-right leader Silvio Berlusconi's cabinet, accused Mr. Bossi of "bluffing".

Deputy leader of the post-fascist National Alliance Maurizio Gasparri said: "It is an operetta," and Green Party

chief Carlo Ripa Di Meana dubbed the move "a cabaret."

However, political leaders were not as keen to shrug aside the issues raised by Mr. Bossi, notably accusations by small and medium-sized businesses in the richer, industrialised north that they pay a high tax levy to support the south.

Mario Carraro, industry president for the Venezia region, where the Northern League won almost 40 per cent of general election votes, told the daily La Repubblica Monday he did not back secession but warned: "Federalism must be the principle instrument for reorganising the state."

Turin's La Stampa daily said: "Bossi, in shouting and threatening, has succeeded in putting regional autonomy on the agenda for the future government, including in the area of tax levying."

On Sunday Mr. Bossi announced he was symbolically forming a "government" of northern Italy and "claimed the right to secession and resistance which is the basis of any constitution."

A week ago, Mr. Bossi put forward the idea of dividing Italy as Czechoslovakia was divided into Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

However, a Northern League militant interviewed Sunday, said "secession was a provocation on the part of Bossi to ensure the lords in the palaces of Rome wake up and decide to give us federalism."

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Children have rights

THE ONE-DAY roundtable session on the right of the child held in Amman Sunday was a timely exercise. When, as the president of the General Union of Voluntary Societies told the meeting, three to five new-borns are picked up from garbage containers weekly, then we do indeed have a big problem to contend with. The initiative of Princess Basma Women's Resources Centre (PBWRC) and the Jordanian National Forum for Women (JNFW) to call for the meeting to discuss the draft law on the right of the child was therefore propitious to set the record straight on the existing omissions in the proposed new legislation drafted by the Ministry of Social Development.

At this juncture we would like to express profound dismay at the fact that only women's associations have taken the lead to offer our children added protection. Children's welfare is a full societal concern and not only women's. Even though the ministries of social development, Awqaf and Islamic affairs, health, education, labour and culture took part in the deliberations, the fact remains that the proposal to convene the gathering was made by women groups.

In any case, many constructive ideas were submitted during the discussions Sunday. What stood out, however, was the proposal to seek a fatwa on adoption since our laws and religious jurisprudence prohibit it altogether. Given the harsh realities, as exemplified by the fact that so many children born out of wedlock are abandoned and there are many families who would very much like to offer them a home, there should be no reason why adoption could not be legalised. Sending abandoned or unwanted children to orphanages should be the last resort and not the first option in caring for them. In the same vein, biological mothers should be given priority in raising their children when the father cannot be identified. When identification becomes necessary, it should be no problem also to conduct a DNA blood examination.

The goal for now ought to be to widen the debate on the draft law and consult with all sectors of society on it. Above all, the concerned parties should heed international norms on the issue as reflected in the International Convention on the Right of the Child which Jordan ratified three years ago. After all, the convention is supposed to have the force of law in the country. The least that we could do to honour our commitments under it is to take its clauses into full consideration when drafting new laws regarding children.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

COMMENTING ON a water-distribution programme, a writer for Al Ra'i daily said Monday that despite the programme the majority of Amman residents complain that they receive little or no water supplies. Ramadan Rawashdeh said that the water authority, which pledged to carry out the programme to ensure fair distribution to various regions, is not applying it, neither is it mending the broken pipes in the streets filled with water that is being wasted. Public complaints about the water-distribution programme are genuine since many of the residents either in western or eastern Amman do not receive water supplies in accordance with the water authority's programme, said the writer who added that the concerned authorities have no justification for their shortcomings. It is the duty of the water authority to ensure water supplies to all regions, but it is noticed that while certain districts do not lack water, many other parts are thirsty and keep complaining to no avail, he added. It is true that the concerned authorities are involved in replacing the old and worn out pipes with new ones, said the writer, but the process is going on slowly and should the situation persist and the water shortages continue, the water authority must find other means to satisfy the basic needs of the public.

A WRITER for Al Dustour criticised Jordanian banks whose managements plan to merge their institutions with others to create larger corporations capable of meeting the new challenges and economic developments. Mohammad Subeithi said that while it is true that these banks' step is being encouraged by the Central Bank of Jordan for technical reasons and to ensure stronger financial institutions in the country, some bank managements are contemplating laying off some of their employees in the event of merger. The writer said that all Jordanian banks have declared profits and distributed bonuses and dividends to the shareholders in the past years and therefore there is no justification at all to lay off any of their workers. He said that the wisest way to deal with mergers is by not appointing new employees and giving advanced training to the existing employees so that they can handle the requirements and the demands of the merged companies. He also said that all Jordanian banks are in fact expanding and what seems to be a surplus of employees because of mergers now can easily be absorbed in the new branches opening every year.

The View from Fourth Circle

Entering the era of the tribal-corporate alliance

By Rami G. Khouri

When an American newspaper columnist friend of mine asked me the other day in Amman what I thought were the most important lessons of the Jordanian experience with democratisation since 1989, I did not have to think very long to answer: style has been far more important than substance in the evolution of our political culture, and tribalism has been far more powerful than democracy as a logistical means of either expressing identity or participating in political decision making.

Now that we have reached the 100 days mark of the government of Abdul Karim Kabariti, a stock-taking of this government's performance reinforces this feeling — which is also confirmed by the results of the poll recently taken by the Centre for Strategic Studies of the University of Jordan, showing that political parties are losing some of the thin public support they had and that traditional social institutions remain very strong in people's lives. I would also add to the list of signs of the durability of tribalism alongside modernism in contemporary Jordan the visible increase in the tribal/family "diwans" all around Amman and the country.

I read these and other signs to mean that most Jordanians are not particularly concerned about the mechanics or the organisational particularities of our democratising institutions and liberalising trend; but, they do care to participate in public life and to have a say in decision making at the public, community and family levels. The lessons from our experience since 1989 tell us that if we want our political transformation to succeed, we should pay much more attention to respecting and building upon indigenous cultural values than to copying imported, Western values and systems. (A corollary thought comes to mind: Samuel Huntington, who proposed his Clash of Civilisations theory a few years ago, has got his clashing order backwards. It is not the Western/American civilisation that is menaced by Islamic/Confucian or other civilisations, but rather the Islamic/Confucian and other ancient cultures that are threatened by a semi-forced conversion to Western/American values.)

The political/cultural scene in Jordan and its steady metamorphosis indicate a very likely direction for modern Arab political evolution. Ours is about the only Arab/Islamic society that has experienced four elements that I believe are crucial for normal, sustainable political growth and maturity: the steady presence of consistent and credible political leadership (the monarchy), prolonged public and private sector investment in human resources development that responds to people's basic needs (education, health, etc.), the will and need to change substantively, and the absence of economic or ideological extremes that could distort the tenor of the emerging, new, public political ethos.

Because Jordan has enjoyed these elements, it has been

able to: a) weather the long period of very restricted, virtually non-existent political participation from the mid-1950s to the late 1980s and, b) undergo a steady political evolution since the advent of the current liberalisation phase of our modern history in 1989, including a very pronounced shift in the last decade from an Islamist/Arab nationalist-dominated political culture to one that today primarily resonates to a new tribal-corporate alliance.

As I tried to convey to my American journalist friend the key elements or lessons of our political evolution since 1989, it quickly became clear that the important ones related directly to the principles and values of Arab tribal culture, while the most glaring failures reflected the would-be importation or imposition of Western values. In my view, the single most important aspect of our democratisation has been its inclusive nature, which allows all persons and parties to play the political game. A second important aspect is providing winners with access to basic political power, whether parliamentary seats, cabinet positions, or patronage and posts in the bureaucracy. A third element is treating people with respect and dignity, consulting them, debating issues with them, explaining policy changes to them, and generally treating them with the civility and esteem they deserve as human beings.

(Notice how post-1989 anti-government popular anger and resentment peaked a year or so ago — not because of government policies on peace with Israel, but mainly because of a perception that the government was being heavy-handed and autocratic with the people, especially in its clampdown on expressions of opposition to normalisation with Israel. Jordanians opposed to normalisation did not expect to have the political power to revoke the peace treaty; but they did expect to have the cultural power and respect to be able to express their opposition without being subjected to the whimsical sensitivities and speedy vetoes of lunatic officials.)

The current picture of our political culture shows a citizenry more concerned about what democratisation means in terms of the government showing respect for the people, individually and collectively, than in terms of individuals working to change government policy. There is much scepticism in the land about modern political institutions, as the University of Jordan poll confirmed (e.g., the average rating for our democratisation drive was 4.55 out of a maximum of 10, a slight slide from 4.83 in 1995; also, 45 per cent of respondents did not think that they enjoyed freedom to demonstrate).

The most fascinating findings of the poll was that 56 per cent of Jordanians did not think that any of the 22 political parties represented their views, and the percentage of Jordanians belonging to parties has slipped from 1.4 per cent in 1993 to 0.5 per cent today. At the same time, though, 76 per cent of respondents said they planned to

vote in the next parliamentary elections. In other words, Jordanians value their ability to express themselves as voters as a sign of their human and political dignity, but at the same time they are not very concerned about the organised expression of their ideological viewpoints via political parties.

We see fresh signs today of the continued importance and durability of traditional tribal values, and the relative delicacy and transience of the institutions of the state, its huge bureaucracy and the modern, Western-tailored institutional political infrastructure of parties, representative legislatures, and other such forms. The fact that 46 per cent of men in the university poll said they had been asked to participate in a traditional tribal "jaha" (a delegation of notables that negotiates inter-tribal issues), and 96 per cent said they had actually participated, indicates the enormous credibility of tribal structures and the low credibility of modern, state-linked means of conflict resolution, negotiation of pacts, or other inter-personal dynamics.

The renaissance being experienced in Jordan today in the institution of the family and tribal "diwan", the traditional meeting place where major family/tribal decisions are made and ceremonies are held, is also most revealing of this same trend of the retribalisation of modern Jordan. One could argue that the enormous number of cabinet ministers in the current government, drawn from parliament, is only a more sophisticated and modern form of this traditional credibility of tribalism.

I personally feel that these trends are not at all worrying, if accompanied by a realisation that tribalism can play a positive role in our modern, urban, monetised society and if it adapts to the challenges and needs of the day. Tribalism only as a romantic throwback to the ways of the past or as a politically expedient means of boarding political power in the hands of small groups of people is not likely to be constructive or sustainable in the long run. Its core values and principles clearly define the modern political transformation of our society, but it is not yet clear whether tribalism as a mode of public decision making can effectively respond to the collective needs of society, especially in terms of economic expansion, job creation, reduction of poverty, and the promotion of a sense of justice in society and especially in the state bureaucracy.

The tribal-corporate alliance now moving towards the forefront of power in Jordan can be a most constructive force for nation-building or, unchecked and unbalanced, it could be the most detrimental domestic development in many decades. I tend to see it as constructive — but only if it proves capable of modernising and assuring those tribal cultural values that remain so vital and credible, namely inclusion, respect, dignity, and a diffused brand of decision-making and power-sharing based on consultation and consensus rather than coercion and autocracy.

Who has a political cure for turbo-capitalism?

By Edward N. Luttwak

WASHINGTON — Economic orthodoxy in America, as taught and proclaimed by almost all academic economists, is fully accepted by Democrats and Republicans as well as by the mainstream parties of Europe. This is the faith that "turbo-charged capitalism" — accelerated change fuelled by global free trade and domestic deregulation — is the only way to run an economy.

The new force of turbo-capitalism is evoking a worldwide populist reaction, manifest in the neo-Communist electoral victories in Eastern Europe, December's strikes in France and Buchananism in America.

The disaffected are turning to political remedies to resist the economic dogma that threatens their jobs and livelihoods.

The inability of the experts and the politicians who rely on them to acknowledge this is a profound danger to the democratic political order.

The reigning orthodoxy holds that the present workings of the U.S. economy are a huge success, propelled above all by the phenomenal breakthroughs of the New Titans of the information age: Microsoft and Intel and their lesser emulators.

Most of these companies did not exist 20 years ago. In the course of rising from very little to their present heights, the New Titans have made several billionaires and thousands of millionaires among early investors, while greatly increasing the wealth of many other shareholders. That makes for a great deal of optimism.

Free trade — that is, the continuing U.S. effort to further "globalise" the world economy by negotiating away trade barriers — is justified by the success of American high-tech exports in general and software in particular. The fact that some 1.4 million jobs are lost (by the very lowest estimate) because of the chronic excess of U.S. imports over exports is held to be of small account. The lost jobs are said to be dead-end positions in declining industries.

Deregulation is likewise justified by the wonderful opportunities it opens up for the New Titans, as well as "lean and mean" telephone and cable television companies that promise to open up the "information superhighway" to all. In the process, the existing regional telephone companies ("the Baby Bells") will likely be swept away. At present they are still regulated monopolies, and as such, sufficiently protected from competition to be steady, well-paying employers and generous supporters of all manner of community activities — to please the regulators, of course.

But the ruling orthodoxy sees no merit in anything that impedes efficiency, implicitly taking for granted that society exists to serve the economy, and not the other way around.

It is enough to look at the employment rolls of the New Titans, as opposed to their share values, to see that Pat Buchanan's pessimism is right and the ruling orthodoxy is all wrong.

Microsoft and Intel, so huge on Wall Street, had a total of 48,100 employees at last count, as opposed to 180,460 employed by Ford alone.

Of course, there are many other New Titans outside the software industry but also risen from nothing, including such diverse companies as South-west Airlines, Nike, Charles Schwab, Genentech, Seagate and Compaq. Still, all of them together do not employ as many Americans as Ford, let alone General Motors (350,000 at last count).

The consequences of these simple numbers are enormous. The New Titans are not generating enough new, high-paying jobs to help the mass of "non-supervisory employees" throughout the U.S. economy — some 77.5 million people, out of the total of 114 million employed Americans.

The wages of non-supervisory employees have been declining for years, from \$8.40 per hour in 1978 to \$7.41 in 1994 (both measured in constant 1982 dollars), precisely because so many Americans have had to settle for poorly paid service jobs. It is not just Wal-Mart (434,000 employees), Kmart (358,000), Sears (403,000) and McDonald's (177,000) that pay little compared with General Motors or DuPont, but also banks.

Mr. Buchanan's remedies, however, unwise, do not lack substance. As against a Microsoft America, whose gross national product (GNP) would be huge but whose employees would be very few, Mr. Buchanan's America would have a somewhat smaller GNP but a far more prosperous middle class.

With imports reduced by high tariffs, more prosperous Americans would suffer a loss of living standards. They would be forced

to buy more expensive and/or inferior U.S.-made goods instead of being able to pick and choose from the world's most competitive production as they now do.

But American industrial workers would be better off. The demand for their labour would increase greatly, to produce those more expensive and/or inferior American goods behind tariff walls that would do wonders for their wages.

U.S. exports would be reduced by other countries' tariffs, offsetting some of that gain. But again it is the more prosperous Americans who would bear the brunt of the loss, just as they now get the lion's share of the benefits of globalisation.

The ruling orthodoxy also has a remedy — to educate all and sundry to the levels that will induce the Microsofts to employ them. Unfortunately, Microsoft and all its companions have no use for many employees, no matter how well educated.

What most working people in the United States, as in Europe, now want is not the possibility of better jobs or higher incomes

through growth. They rightly suspect that their earnings will not increase with more turbo-capitalism. Rather, they want security for the jobs and incomes they already have, which are threatened as much by growth as by a lack of it.

The majority certainly do not want more assistentialism. People who are employed but who fear for their economic future have no use for political parties that want to tax away more of their uncertain incomes in order to assist those who do not work, and to feed huge, inefficient bureaucracies.

Mr. Buchanan's season of political success may be drawing to a close, but his critique of the economic orthodoxy is still awaiting a response from the high-minded people who criticise him without formulating any plausible substitute for his extreme remedies.

The writer is a senior fellow at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies. This article is reprinted from The Washington Post.

LETTERS

Setting the record straight

To the Editor:

I would like to clarify some of the information that appeared in your May 13, 1996, issue regarding the visit of the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Dr. Saleh Irsheidat to the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB).

Akram Masarweh, secretary general of the Ministry of Tourism, is the chairman of the JTB, and not of what you called the "hoteliers and restaurateurs association, a non-existent entity."

JTB is an autonomous body made up of members representing the private sector of the tourism industry in Jordan, including Royal Jordanian, the Jordan Hotels Association and the Jordanian Travel Agents Association. Its mandate is to promote Jordan as a tourist destination in international markets.

Marwan Khoury,
Executive Director,
Jordan Tourism Board,
Amman.

Roots abandoned in Africa

To the Editor:

What more does one need to write since a picture, they say, is worth more than a thousand words?

I am referring to the photographs published in the Jordan Times (May 9/10 issue) when covering the Liberian civil war.

I personally think that the era of democracy in the Kingdom gives freedom of expression new dimensions. But one thing is also clear: the photographs are not only disgusting, but also reprehensible to every sane mind.

Thus, in keeping with this democratic trend, I am looking forward to seeing in your subsequent issues the bodies of people mutilated in the name of family honour, variously reported in your newspaper. Very shortly,

too, I expect to see photos of the publicly beheaded in Saudi Arabia and possibly those whose arms are being amputated in Iraq for theft.

Anything less than this would only be unfair. And perceived as a stereotype.

Of all the time I have been in this beautiful country, I cannot for even once remember reading anything good about Africa in your newspaper. Your coverage has ranged from civil strife to war, from carnage to starvation, from epidemic to AIDS. How very sad.

I think it is better not to talk about the hunger of a hungry man when one has no bread to offer him.

Africa, with all its chequered history resulting from slavery, exploitation and colonialism, today is totally neglected and termed as unredeemable.

The African continent may be benighted, but its people are no less humane than any other people around the world. And the barbaric acts seen in those Liberian photographs do not represent the attitude or posture of the peoples of Africa. Barbarism is not an acceptable norm in the culture of any African people, contrary to what ignorant and misinformed people anywhere might think.

Besides, there are beautiful sides of Africa that many people do not seem to know. The continent is the land of extremes: nowhere is the day as bright or the night as dark; the desert as barren and the vegetation as luxurious.

Now on the realistic side of the Liberian crisis, America has even fewer excuses than the leaders of the fighting factions. Liberia has been totally neglected by America which seems to have forgotten that the ancestors of those fighting today are mostly the dehumanised people brought from America to live in a place they named Liberia (from liberation) after the industrial revolution in America.

To many, Liberia will always be seen as an extension of America. So, America, you are expected to do more than having the African peacekeeping forces (ECOMOG) trying to end the war in this tiny country of two and a half million people.

Harry Pullens,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

مكتبة الجولدن

Settler killed in W.Bank

(Continued from page 1)

Israel Radio quoted Mr. Barak as telling the parliamentary defence and foreign affairs committee that new security measures could be imposed on the territories due to continuing threats of attacks by Palestinian militants.

Israel clamped an unprecedented closure on the territories following a spate of suicide bombings in February and early March that left 63 dead, including the bombers.

There have been no deadly attacks on Israelis since the last bombing on March 4 and Mr. Peres, whose popularity was badly damaged by the violence, has built up a steady lead of four to six points over his challenger for prime minister, conservative opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu.

But polls suggest that a resumption of major anti-Israeli attacks before polling day would likely lead to Mr. Peres' defeat.

The Israeli army on Monday closed two West Bank mosques for allegedly supporting subversive Palestinian activities, military officials said.

Peter Lerner, spokesman for the military administration in the West Bank, said the mosques, in the villages of Qabalan south of Nablus and Al Ram north of Jerusalem, were closed for six months after soldiers found "incitement materials" in them.

The army also announced the arrest of six suspects on the West Bank.

The six, "suspected of belonging to or aiding hostile organisations," were arrested near Ramallah, Jenin and Hebron.

Israel's chief peace negotiator said on Sunday Israel will make a much-delayed withdrawal from parts of Hebron in about one month.

Meanwhile, Mr. Netanyahu was quoted as saying it would be wise to delay the Hebron redeployment until a permanent peace deal.

"Our estimate, jointly, Israeli and Palestinian, is that it will take about a month," negotiator Uri Savir told Israel Television's main Arabic news programme.

Asked if that meant Israel was delaying the redeploy-

ment, which should have occurred on March 28 according to a deal expanding Palestinian self-rule signed last September, until after the Israeli elections, Mr. Savir said.

"A month from today seems to me will be after the elections in Israel."

Israel's Itim news agency quoted Mr. Netanyahu as saying about the Hebron redeployment: "It should be delayed until after the permanent settlement."

Israel froze its pull out from Hebron after the suicide bombings in February and March. It demanded Palestinian officials crack down on militants in areas already under self-rule.

Subsequently, Mr. Peres said Israel would keep its peace deal commitments but disappointed Palestinians by not setting a certain date for the redeployment.

There will be only partial redeployment in Hebron because Israeli troops will remain to guard about 400 Jewish settlers living in heavily fortified enclaves among the town's 120,000 Palestinians.

Meanwhile, Israel issued travel permits to about 50 Palestinian journalists, allowing them to enter its territory despite a closure of the West Bank and Gaza. Officials said.

Shlomo Dror, a spokesman for the army's liaison unit with the Palestinians, said the restrictions had been imposed on journalists as well for security reasons.

"We have information that some journalists used their government press cards for other purposes," said Dror.

Mr. Dror said Israeli security officials did not believe the journalists were carrying out violent acts but helped indirectly by carrying messages.

Only about 50 of the 160 Palestinian journalists accredited to work in Israel received the new permits, Mr. Dror and a government press office official said.

A total of 12,000 Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip are currently allowed to work in Israel. Nearly 100,000 Palestinians have worked in Israel during normal times.

Iran opens 'Silk Road' railway

(Continued from page 1)

kilometres, was finished late last year at a cost of \$45 million.

Transport capacity initially will be 500,000 passengers a year and two million tonnes of goods, rising eventually to one million passengers and eight million tonnes.

Iran, subject to a U.S. economic embargo, is hailed the railway as the first concrete achievement in a strategy to build its role as a regional economic power.

It has shrugged off the sanctions and is seeking to build its role as a regional player through the Tehran-based Economic Cooperation Organisation — known as ECO.

Iran founded the ECO with Pakistan and Turkey as a springboard to pursue its economic agenda. ECO was expanded in 1992 to include five former Soviet Central Asian states — Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan — plus Azerbaijan and Afghanistan.

Heads of state will hold ECO's fourth summit on Tuesday and Wednesday in the Turkmen capital Ashgabat and are expected to agree to a redrafting of the ECO founding treaty already hampered out by foreign ministers.

Ghali: Iraq deal needs work

(Continued from page 1)

Iraq has contacted the three other Security Council permanent members — China, France, and Russia — to press its case.

(MEES) said if a solution were not reached within "the next 10 days... there is a risk that the talks may simply run into a brick wall of political paralysis."

The "real problem" emerged with the U.S. and British amendments to tighten control over the distribution of supplies, prevent Iraq from using revenues for anything but humanitarian supplies, and guarantee the deal is not a prelude to a total lifting of the sanctions, MEES said.

In addition to improving transport links, ECO has created a joint shipping company. It is setting up a trade and development bank and a reinsurance company. A joint airline, ECO Air, launched its inaugural flight on Monday.

ECO foreign ministers said on Saturday the group was not yet fit to compete with Asian, American and European blocs. Iran called for tariffs to be scrapped outright.

Islamist party may join cabinet

(Continued from page 12)

our participation in it, and we have conditions for joining which will be discussed in meetings with the authority," Mr. Abdul Latif told Reuters.

He said: "We will not take up political ministries. We want those ministries which would render services to citizens such as education and social service."

Former rivals forge Kabul alliance

(Continued from page 12)

prime ministry, the defence ministry and finance ministry.

In exchange, Mr. Rahbani was to remain as president for six months until elections are held.

"The top Hezb commander here General Abdul Majid Niaz, told AFP: "The deal between our two parties has now basically been finalised and we have begun implementing the terms of the accord agreed between us."

"Our troops are stationed in two barracks in the city alongside government men and we are expecting more senior officials, including engineer Hekmatyar, to come to Kabul soon," he said.

"There are still one or two small problems to be ironed out, but we are now both on the same side after being ideologically separated for years through the interference of our foreign enemies," he added.

Sources from both groups said the Hezb leader and his

top cadres would arrive in besieged Kabul "soon" to take up government posts, although neither could give an exact date.

The deal came after months of tense negotiations between the two sides and amid persistent rumours of the pact or of a complete breakdown in talks.

"The Hezb-e-Islami has finally joined the government, implementing the agreement signed between the two groups," a defence spokesman said.

"They have already started deploying troops at government bases in Kabul and will fight under the government banner in any military operation against the Taliban or any other enemy of the state," he added.

A full political and military alliance between the two, which now seems likely, would give both groups a major and much needed boost, analysts said.

Train brought life, sorrow to Arctic mining region

Post-Communist Tirana throbs to beat of free market

By Steve Pagani
Reuters

TIRANA — Lenin was ousted by a neon-lit gambling arcade and Stalin displaced by a glitzy cafe.

Albania has thrown off 45 years of rigid Communist rule with a vengeance and is embracing the free market with more enthusiasm than other young democracies in the Balkans.

Bronze statues of Lenin and Stalin who stood opposite each other like guardians of the creed across Tirana's main Deshmoret E Kombit (martyrs of the nation) Boulevard were hauled down in 1991, just months after Communism fell.

Now, in their place, crop-haired youths clad in baggy plaid shirts and denim jeans hang out at the Kumanova Cafe guzzling coca-cola while their friends shuffle into the admiral arcade across the road to try their luck at the slot machines.

Foreign drinks and gambling were banned by "the great teacher", the affectionate name given to Albania's postwar Stalinist strongman Enver Hoxha.

A huge stone figure of Hoxha was also wrenched from its pedestal in the main Skanderbeg Square. Whoops and screams no longer come from the party faithful but from children enjoying fun fair rides on the very spot where it stood.

The capital, Tirana, is where it is at. The city, home to 300,000 people, is noisy, hustling and brash.

The days of queuing outside monochrome shops selling shoddy Chinese-made goods or sitting over a raki (local brandy) and thin coffee in one of the few dimly-lit cafes are over.

Kiosk and stall owners selling a range of goods from live chickens to second-hand TV sets. Bicycles crowd the streets.

Spruce shops containing pricey Western-made consumer goods rub shoulders with new marble-fronted offices, such as branches of foreign banks, the licences for which Albania's conservative government appears only too happy to issue.

In a pro-Western drive, president Sali Berisha opened Albania's first stock exchange last week, a month before the country's third free elections on May

26. Downtown, the central bazaar spills over with a cornucopia of fruit and vegetables, olives, sacks of paprika, lentils and beans in a riot of colour.

Nearly 3,000 privately-owned bars and restaurants have opened since 1991. Some are modest, others, boasting awnings and terraces, could grace any European capital.

At rush hour, the city centre can become clogged with traffic in a country where six years ago owning a car was a pipe-dream or a privilege of the Communist elite.

Large German-made cars, especially Mercedes, and four-wheel drives are the biggest status symbol among Albanians.

One local dealer said at least 80 per cent were stolen and "imported", mainly from Italy, Germany and Bulgaria. Some, proudly sporting new Tirana number-plates, still display Italian insurance papers or the country identification sticker.

Spared allied bombing during World War II, Tirana retains the influence of 500 years of Ottoman rule. On the wide, tree-lined boulevard, big, fascist-style buildings constructed by the Italians before they occupied Albania in 1939 look imposing next to the grey Soviet-type structures of the 1950s.

A modernist, concrete pyramid erected to Hoxha's pharaonic glory jolts the eye. Hoxha has been turfed out and a cultural centre moved in, together with the U.S. Information Agency. An aerial on the apex beams out voice of America.

But a visitor who confines a foray to the main streets will leave with the wrong impression. A look beyond reveals that by European standards Albania is still very poor.

Metres away from the opera house, a baby, no older than a year old, shrieks pitifully in a cardboard box in the scorching sun. Passers-by drop money in the box while its mother looks on from across the street.

Expectations have risen, making life more of a struggle for those who can look but cannot afford the goods on offer.

Mother-of-two Eriketa,

strolling in the shadow of Tirana's 100-year-old stone mosque, said "the biggest change had been the taste of freedom and new contacts with the outside world."

"We now have lots of new shops and an open way of life but things are getting very expensive. Life on the salary of a civil servant is very hard," she said, with her Italian sunglasses propped on her stylishly-coiffured hair.

Even in the capital, life is still difficult. Power is now more reliable but running water is only available three times a day for two hours at time.

The average wage is \$60 a month, but in Tirana the figure is artificial as thousands supplement their income by working in the black economy. They have to if they want to buy sports shoes at \$25, Turkish-made Levi jeans at \$27, a British washing machine at \$650 or a Japanese colour television at \$1,260.

The enterprise culture is alive outside Tirana. Ironically, some of the 300,000 concrete, igloo-like bunkers, testimony to Hoxha's isolationist paranoia, are being turned to profit.

In Durres on the Adriatic coast, 40 km west of Tirana, three large bunkers on the beach are now restaurants — the gun emplacement making an ideal site for the kitchen.

One even has a terrace built on top, shaded by a canopy of terracotta roof tiles and hanging baskets of flowers.

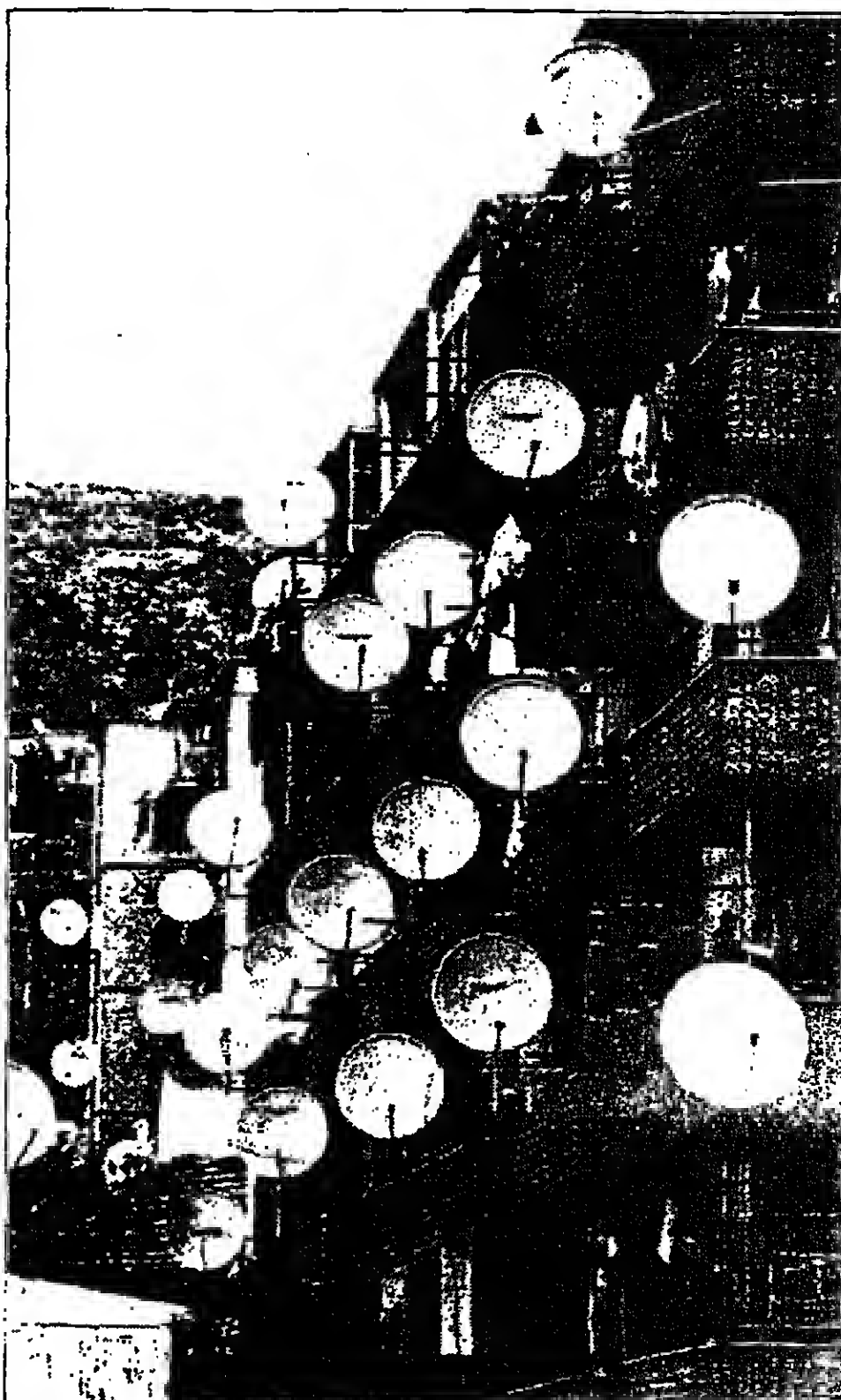
But travel for just 10 minutes in any direction outside Tirana on the narrow roads, riddled with potholes, and the contrasts with the capital are stark.

Traffic becomes sparser and cars give way to carts pulled by horses or oxen with many of their younger drivers straddling a cart as if leading a chariot race.

Hold-ups are more likely to be caused by drowsy donkeys sitting in the road or flocks of sheep shepherded by weather-beaten youngsters as young as 10 years old.

"The government would like the children to go to school but the families are too poor. You have to grow up quickly in the countryside here," one local said.

Most countryfolk walk or



The satellite dish is one trend permeating both town and country in the former most isolationist land, Albania, where pricey Western-made consumer goods rub shoulder with new marble-fronted offices (Reuters photo)

hitch, among them young conscripts incongruously dressed in green Chinese-style uniforms with peaked caps, first supplied by the Red Army after Hoxha befriended Beijing in 1961 after falling out with the Kremlin.

There is also a downside to Albania's free market. In the small town of Lac, 45 km north of Tirana, hundreds were laid off when

the grimy Chinese-built phosphate factory closed most of its operation.

Just after breakfast, scores of jobless men crowd outside Albania's latest craze — the bingo hall. While they spend their time hoping to win the big one, their women, swathed in long skirts, scarves and shawls scurry around carrying firewood on their backs or tending animals in the

fields.

One trend, however, has permeated both town and country — the satellite dish. One setting sums up modern Albania — the almost-Biblical sight of a woman draped in a long dress and white head-wrap sitting on a hillock spinning wool by hand. Behind her in the distance, a satellite dish propped on a peasant's cottage.

Unemployment is high. In the boom years of the 1970s, the iron mine run by Lkab employed 5,000 people. Now only 1,700 of the town's residents work there.

"In the mid-1970s, we had fantastic years. As many as 30 trains left everyday," said Lkab spokeswoman Helen Gammellgard.

Today 12 trains leave a day, each carrying 4,000 tonnes of refined iron ore in addition to passengers. Competition from north America, Brazil and Australia has hurt Kiruna.

Lkab says only about half of the ore reserves, which it estimates at two kilometres deep, have been mined.

Locals sometimes take the train for a quick shopping trip to Norway for groceries or alcohol, since prices can vary from one side of the border to the other.

It can be done in a day by catching the 0615 GMT train to Narvik and the 1600 GMT train home.

"This place holds a strange attraction for me," said Fabio, a 27-year-old factory worker from Legnano, Italy, on the three-hour train ride from Kiruna to Narvik.

"Kiruna is like a cemetery. There is no one here."

Although Kiruna's pop-

By Abigail Schmelz
Reuters

KIRUNA, Sweden — A scenic railway line between Sweden and Norway through the desolate Arctic landscape is a lifeline for the region's scattered inhabitants, but also a painful scar on Swedish history.

The line provides transport for Swedish iron ore to a coastal port in Norway and some historians say there is proof that neutral Sweden allowed Nazi Germany to use the route to transfer weapons into occupied Norway.

"We do know that there were weapons that came through Sweden with the rail. During the war the Germans shipped iron ore to Germany," Norwegian local historian Kjell Dalmo told Reuters.

Without the railway, the area would probably have remained largely uninhabited.

More than one billion tonnes of iron ore have been carried on the track from Swedish mines to Norway's Ofoten Fjord, whose deep waters remain free of ice year-round thanks to the Gulf Stream.

"Without the railroad,

there never would have been anything here," Geir Ketil Hansen, a local culture expert told Reuters.

It was known as early as the 17th century that the Swedish mountains were rich in iron ore but there was no way to move it from the landlocked location. Early attempts were made using reindeer and river boats.

The British, hungry for ore to feed their steel industry, tried to build a rail link in the 1880s but the project went bankrupt and was abandoned. Sweden and Norway took over and connected the Swedish mining town Kiruna to Narvik in 1902.

Workers battled disease and harsh elements to toil 10 hours a day blasting through rock to lay the track, considered a technological achievement when it was finished.

Besides a few settlements of the indigenous sami people, "there wasn't anything else up here," Agge Theander, author of a book called "Tracing the Navies", told Reuters.

Allegations that the Nazis used the railway to transport weapons, never admitted by Swedish

authorities, remain a sore point in Norway.

Nils Ryeng, director of Narvik's War Museum, said Nazis hid arms among the fuel and food marked with the red cross symbol, which were allowed to cross the border into Norway.

"Norwegian prisoners... have told me that there was ammunition under the coal," Mr. Ryeng told Reuters.

"(The Norwegians) were slaves for the Germans, with bayonets in their backs. They had to bring ammunition for the Germans to the front line from the railway station in deep snow," he said.

Nowadays the railway is also a tourist attraction. The 169 km between Kiruna and Narvik curves over mountain passes and offers spectacular views of some of Scandinavia's highest peaks.

Thousands of tourists travel each year to the area which is part of Lapland, the tundra region which covers northern Sweden, Norway, Finland and the Russian Kola Peninsula.

Adventurers from around the world come for dog-sledding, skiing or a glimpse of the north-

ern lights during the long winter when the temperature can stay below freezing for six months.

The train negotiates countless tunnels as it follows the path cut by thousands of labourers, through forests of birch and pine and along Lake Tornetrask before passing Sweden's highest mountain, Kebnekaise, 2,117 metres high.

The route's attractions include Abisko canyon, waterfalls, power stations, mines and remains of the railway workers' settlements.

Others will come to see the midnight sun around the summer solstice and to camp, fish, raft and explore caves and mines on summer days which are literally endless.

The lonely landscape, where there are as few as three people per square kilometre, is a curiosity to outsiders.

"This place holds a strange attraction for me," said Fabio, a 27-year-old factory worker from Legnano, Italy, on the three-hour train ride from Kiruna to Narvik.

"Kiruna is like a cemetery. There is no one here."

Although Kiruna's pop-

Rockets eliminated by Sonics in OT

Bulls, Magic more closer to expected showdown

NEW YORK (AP) — The Bulls are headed back to Chicago with a 3-1 lead, thanks to Bill Wennington and not Michael Jordan.

Jordan didn't have a field goal in the fourth quarter and didn't score a point in the period until 11 seconds remained, but Wennington made two key baskets late in the game and the Bulls beat the New York Knicks 94-91 Sunday.

Chicago went more than six minutes without a field goal in the fourth quarter, allowing the Knicks to come back from an 11-point deficit and take a 89-86 lead.

Wennington broke the drought with a dunk over Patrick Ewing with 1:32 left, then the reserve centre put Chicago ahead for good on a baseline jumper with 37 seconds to go.

Ewing missed a jumper and Jordan made two foul shots with 11.2 seconds left, giving the Knicks a chance to try for a tie. But John Starks had trouble handling a pass from Anthony Mason and was called for walking with 1.2 seconds left — just before he drained a 3-pointer that would have tied it.

Chicago inbounded cleanly

The Sonics went on a 9-0 run in the overtime to overcome Houston's first lead of the game in the extra period.

Clyde Drexler had a free throw to open the overtime, then Mario Elie's shot went in off the glass with 3:18 to go to give the Rockets a 104-101 advantage.

But Sam Perkins hit a pair of free throws, Hersey Hawkins had a layup, Kemp was fouled as his shot went in and converted for a 3-point play, then Hawkins made another pair of free throws to put Seattle ahead to stay.

Houston, showing the heart that marked its tenure as NBA champion, tied the game at 101 with 4.1 seconds to go in regulation on Cassell's big shot.

Magic 103, Hawks 96: In Atlanta, the Magic, led by 24 points from Shaquille O'Neal, took a 3-0 lead over Atlanta in the best-of-7 Eastern Conference semifinals. It was the sixth straight victory over the playoffs for Orlando.

Foul trouble kept O'Neal on the bench for long stretches in the second half, but he came up with two big plays in the final minutes.



Atlanta Hawks' Grant Long finds his two points blocked by Orlando Magic's Jon Koncak in the fourth quarter at Atlanta, May 12.

The Magic beat the Hawks 103-96 to take their third game in a new row in the best of seven series (Reuters photo)

NBA PLAYOFFS

to Wennington and the horn sounded, and the Bulls beat the Knicks 94-91 Sunday.

Seattle 114, Houston 107: In Houston, Shawn Kemp scored five of Seattle's 13 points in overtime as the Sonics fended off an emotion-filled comeback by two-time U.S. National Basketball Association champion Houston to win 114-107 Sunday and complete a sweep of the best-of-seven Western Conference semifinals.

The Rockets erased a 20-point second-half deficit, forcing overtime on Sam Cassell's 3-pointer with 4.1 seconds left in regulation, and took their only lead of the game in the overtime. Over the last two seasons, Houston had won its previous eight playoff games in which it faced elimination but couldn't do it a ninth time.

Kemp had 32 points and 15 rebounds and Gary Payton added 24 points and 11 assists to pace the Sonics, who will face the winner of the San Antonio-Utah series in the Western Conference finals.

After Atlanta cut the Magic lead to 97-96 on two free throws by Christian Laettner with 2:47 remaining, O'Neal caught a pass in the lane with Laettner on his back. Instead of trying to force up a shot and risk his sixth foul, O'Neal dished the ball outside to Dennis Scott, who hit a 3-pointer with 2:28 left.

Anfernee Hardaway tipped in his own miss with 1:46 remaining to give the Magic a 102-96 lead, then O'Neal sealed the victory at the defensive end. Steve Smith drove through the lane but was stuffed by Shaq, with the ball deflecting out of bounds off Smith's back.

Laettner led Atlanta with 26 points, and Mookie Blaylock kept the Hawks close in the third quarter with 16 of his 20 points.

Jazz 101, Spurs 86: In Salt Lake City, it was another blowout victory for the Utah Jazz, another woeful performance by David Robinson.

Chris Morris scored 25 points on 11-of-14 shooting, Karl Malone had 22 points

and the Jazz took a 3-1 lead in their best-of-7 series against the San Antonio Spurs with a 101-86 victory Sunday night.

Utah's three victories have been by 20, 30 and 15 points. Game 5 is Tuesday night at the Alamogordo Convention Center. Robinson had just 31 points — the same as in the Spurs' 105-75 loss Saturday — and took just three shots from the field before fouling out midway through the fourth quarter.

Sean Elliott led San Antonio with 22 points, Chuck Person had 17 and Avery Johnson 14.

Morris, a starter ever since

but was 3-for-4 from 3-point range in Game 4. John Stockton added 13 points and 10 assists.

PLAYOFF RESULTS

Eastern Conference semifinals			
Chicago	94	New York	91
(Chicago leads best-of-seven series 3-1)			
Orlando	100	Atlanta	96
(Orlando leads best-of-seven series 3-0)			
Western Conference semifinals			
Seattle	114	Houston	107 (OT)
(Seattle wins best-of-seven series 4-0)			
Utah	101	San Antonio	86
(Utah leads best-of-seven series 3-1)			

Rockets praise team who dethroned them

HOUSTON (R) — The two-time defending champion Houston Rockets were dethroned on Sunday, and they had nothing but praise for the Seattle SuperSonics who swept them out of the Western Conference semifinals.

"They played a tremendous series," said Houston guard Mario Elie. "They wanted it more than we did and I think that was the bottom line."

"There were several times

in this series I really believed we were going to make that last shot," said Rockets coach Rudy Tomjanovich after the 114-107 overtime thriller that completed Seattle's 4-0 sweep. "In the past we did, this series we didn't — they were the guys that made the big shots."

Seattle's victory throughout the series was marked by pinpoint shooting and a swarming defense.

"We ran into a phenom-

al basketball team," said Tomjanovich. "I wish these guys a lot of luck. I think they're great."

He said the Sonics have the kind of bench depth that wins championships and an array of offensive weapons that make them hard to defend.

Seattle coach George Karl said the key to the sweep was the Sonics' first-round win over the lowly Sacramento Kings.

The past two years, the

Supersonics were knocked out of the playoffs in first-round upsets, and they began to fear it might happen again after the Kings won a game in Seattle.

But the Supersonics recovered to win the Sacramento series and, in so doing, "we killed a big, heavy monkey that was hanging on our neck," Karl said.

Now the Supersonics are thinking they can go all the way.

"I think they believe now," Karl said of his team.

The proud Rockets, who came back from a 20-point deficit with 10 minutes left to force overtime on Sunday, vowed to regroup and make another title run next year.

"We're out of here this year, but we'll be back in 11 next year," said guard Clyde Drexler.

"This team never quits in any way, shape or fashion," he said.

Kiko goal keeps Atletico on course for title

MADRID (R) — An 85th-minute goal by Kiko Narvaez kept Atletico Madrid on course for the Spanish League title on Sunday after a nerve-wracking 2-1 home win over bottom club Salamanca.

Valencia and Barcelona, respectively second and third, must now win all their games if they are to deprive Atletico of what would be their first League and Cup double.

Atletico need only win one of their remaining two matches to guarantee the title.

Kiko, the international for-

ward who made his name in Spain's 1992 Olympic side, put his head over 20 minutes when he headed home a Roberto Fresnedoso cross.

But Atletico were unable to capitalise on their domination and Salamanca struck back in a rare counter-attack midway through the second half when Romanian forward Ovidio Stinga broke clear and lobbed advancing Atletico keeper Jose Molina.

The nightmare of a club had not achieved a home victory since February 25 seemed to be coming true until Kiko picked up a

seemingly harmless ball on the edge of the area and turned beautifully to thread his shot through the Salamanca defence.

Atletico stay four points ahead of Valencia, 2-1 winners at Sevilla despite having two players sent off.

Valencia's vastly inferior goal difference means that the gap is effectively five points, while Barcelona, whose game at Espanyol was suspended because of heavy rain on Saturday, are eight points back, having played one game fewer.

MAJOR LEAGUE RESULTS

NEW YORK (R) — Results of Major League Baseball games on Sunday

National League			
Florida	7	Colorado	5
Montreal	7	Boston	6
Philadelphia	6	Atlanta	0
San Francisco	3	Pittsburgh	2
Chicago	7	New York	0
San Diego	5	Cincinnati	0
St. Louis	6	Los Angeles	5
American League			
Toronto	8	Boston	7 (in 10)
New York	9	Chicago	5
Milwaukee	6	Baltimore	4
Detroit	5	Texas	3
Oakland	8	Minnesota	3
Seattle	8	Kansas City	5
Cleveland at California — night game			

Lebanon beats Turkmenistan 3-1 in Asian Cup qualifier

BEIRUT (AP) — Lebanon overpowered Turkmenistan 3-1 Sunday in a qualifying soccer match for the Asian Nations Cup. Half-time score was 1-1.

They will meet for the second leg in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on May 26.

Kuwait, the third nation bracketed in Group 10 of the qualifying rounds, has already beaten Turkmenistan twice.

China and Saudi Arabia have already qualified for the 12-nation titleholder Japan and host UAE are automatic qualifiers.

Turkmenistan midfielder Konstantin Potduev opened the score in the 20th minute

Sunday at Beirut's Bourj Hammoud stadium before a crowd of 10,000.

He broke through the Lebanese defence and fired past goalkeeper Ahmad Sakr from the right side of the bar.

Lebanese striker Wael Nazha equalised in the 27th minute after outrunning three Turkmenistan defenders and scoring from 5 metres.

The Lebanese dominated the second half. Midfielder Jamal Taba headed home a cross ball in the 67th minute, sending the home crowd into frenzied cheering. Shadi Karneeb made it 3-1 in the last minute.

Lineups: Turkmenistan: Vital Kafanov, Youri Megdiev, Igor Shoumylov, Vitali Tchoukurov, Vitali Teplov, Youri Borodolov, Konstantin Potduev, Sergey Plyushenko, Agay Mouslim, Vitali Zolotoukhin, Rakhim Kourbanmamedov.

LEBANON: Ahmad Sakr, Salim Hamzeh, Abbas Sharour, Ibrahim Hussni, Korkein Inkebarian, Bahkin Malekian, Jamal Taba, Armin Golbadarian, Shadi Karneeb, Vartan Gazarian, Wael Nazha.

Referee: Mohammad Majed, Bahrain.

Wilander loses U.S. clay court championship final

PINEHURST, North Carolina (R) — A career built on perseverance didn't help Mats Wilander Sunday as the veteran's lack of patience enabled up-and-coming Fernando Meligeni of Brazil to win the \$264,250 U.S. clay court championships 6-4 6-2.

The 31-year-old, 85th-ranked Wilander was looking for his 34th career title — his first since winning Itaparica, Brazil in November 1990.

But the former world number one and seven-time Grand Slam tournament champion never settled into Sunday's match against the 25-year-old Meligeni.

"I was a bit too psyched up about winning the match, winning the tournament, rather than worrying about how to beat this guy," Wilander said.

"I had everything to lose, which is the opposite for him. I'm sure he would have felt like he was the underdog today."

The 76th-ranked Meligeni agreed he was the player coming into the match with the disadvantage, considering he had lost to Wilander in their three previous outings, including three weeks ago in Bermuda.

Not afraid to take a chance, the outgoing Meligeni decided to assume a totally different tactic in this fourth meeting with the Swede.

"This is one of the best matches I've played," said Meligeni, who won \$37,500 for his second career victory. "Today, I got into the match. I was aggressive. I played deep. I kept telling myself, I have to win, I have to win, I must win."

Normally a typical South American clay court specialist, Meligeni fulfilled his goal to take the offensive immediately. He broke Wilander's first two service games for a 3-0 lead.

Meligeni actually approached the net as often as any serve and volleyer. And he more than held his own there, winning 23 of 27 points at net. "I played hard," Meligeni said. "I just went to the net and I never go to the net. I won at the net and I never did this before."

Meligeni's success was applauded by Wilander.

"Fernando played a great match," Wilander said. "I won the three previous matches, but they didn't mean as much as this one. This was the big one and he took it."



Prince Abdullah (right) and co-driver Amr Bilal (3rd left) during the 1986 Jordan Rally (file photo)

HRH Prince Abdullah confirms participation in Jordan Rally

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Organisers of the 14th Jordan International Rally, the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ), Monday confirmed the participation of His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Bin Al Hussein in the two-day event which begins Thursday.

Prince Abdullah will be driving a Ford Escort RS Cosworth and his co-driver will be Philip Mills. Fifteen other Jordanian drivers will be contesting the event which forms the second round of the Middle East Rally Championship.

Prince Abdullah has a third place overall finish to his credit in the 1986 and 1988 Jordan rallies as well as the Jordan Open titles in the same years.

Meanwhile, two other participants pulled out of the event leaving 33 competitors in the battle of the gruelling desert stages which make up the route of the rally for the second year running following the

cancellation of asphalt stages after the 1994 rally. Sheikh Abdullah Al Qasbi and Sadeq Fadel of the UAE pulled out. Jordanians Amjad Farrah and George Shamoun had withdrawn earlier in the week.

Most foreign competitors have arrived and begun practising for the rally. These include Cyprus' Andreas Tsoulofias and Melinaelos Melissas, Bahrain's Jaseem Al Fardan, France's Remi Samuel, Great Britain's Stephen Hancock, Kuwait's Sabah Al Anzi, Australia's Ron Cremen, Qatar's Naser Khalifa Al Attiyeh and the UAE's Salem Bin Shiban.

Defending champion Abdullah Bakhshab of Saudi Arabia and five-time winner Mohammad Bin Sulayyem were the first to arrive earlier last week.

Jordan's reigning champion Ahmad Al Daoud and brother Mohammad will be driving new Ford Escort RS Cosworths. Other local competitors include last year's third place finisher Marouf Abu Samra, fourth

placed Bashar Bustami, Faris Bustami, Tamer Taba, Ibrahim Ata Ali, Hasan Abu Samra, Zeid Asfour, Bishara Qu'or, Bashar Yassin, Asem Aref, Fayed Sayegh, Tony Khilasi.

The Forte Grand remains the rally headquarters for the third consecutive year despite RACJ lacking a main sponsor for the event for the third time in its 14-year history.

Like last year, the route will cover all desert tracks that will take competitors from Amman and head south as far as the rose-red city of Petra. Participants will drive a total of 860 kilometres including 325 kilometres of 14 special stages.

The rally sets out from King Abdullah Gardens in Shmeisani at noon Thursday which will see competitors driving four special stages and a total of 241 kilometres on the first day. Action starts at 7 a.m. on Friday as the route will cover 617 kilometres and will include 10 stages.

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL: 634144 PHILADELPHIA Sharom Stone & Robert Deniro in Casino Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:00, 9:00	CINEMA TEL: 699238 PLAZA *The Heartbreak Kid Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 *Toy Story Shows: 2:00, 5:00	CINEMA TEL: 877420 CONCORD CONCORD "1" *OUT BREAK Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 *Ace Ventura "2" Shows: 5:00, 8:00 CONCORD "2" RICHIE RICH Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 10:30	Amman Theatre & Cinema TEL: 618274 - 618275 Antonio Banderas & Salma Hayek in Desperado Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Nabil & Hisham's Theatre TEL: 625155 PRESENTS THE SATIRICAL COMEDY Arab Human Rights Starts Monday, May 13 at 8:30 p.m. For reservation please call 625155 - 640155
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Jordan Rab...

L.A. remains unbeaten in U.S. soccer league

SAN JOSE (R) — The Los Angeles Galaxy have left little doubt as to which team has been the class of Major League Soccer a month into its maiden season.

The Galaxy remained the league's only unbeaten team, winning their fifth game in as many tries, as they edged the host San Jose club 2-1 on Sunday on Gregg Vanney's goal with eight minutes remaining at Spartan Stadium.

Vanney was added to the Galaxy's reserve roster to replace ailing midfielder Chris Armas, who has been hobbled by a sore right hamstring muscle.

"This is amazing," Vanney said. "You only dream about this happening."

Ecuadorian Eduardo Hurtado lifted the Galaxy into a 1-0 lead in the seventh minute, but the Clash (3-4) equalized in the 75th minute on Paul Bravo's fourth goal in the last four matches.

Los Angeles, with two games in hand over its closest rival, took a four-point lead over the Dallas Burn (5-2) in the Western Conference.

"The other teams are just as good as we are," Los Angeles coach Lofthar Osander said. "We just seem to have a little extra luck behind us."

The other four weekend matches were decided with come-from-behind wins.

The Burn rallied for two goals in the final 11 minutes to defeat the Kansas City Wiz 3-2. John Kerr equalized in the 79th minute and Uruguayan Washington Rodriguez fired home the game-winner five minutes from time. Jason Kreis had given visiting Dallas a 1-0 lead, but Preki's two goals boosted Kansas City (3-4) into a 2-1 halftime advantage.

Brian McBride's second goal, with a minute remaining, lifted the host Columbus crew to a 3-2 comeback victory over the New England Revolution.

New England (2-3) grabbed a 2-0 halftime advantage on goals by Brazilian Welton and Argentine Alberto Naveda. But Columbus (3-3) struck for three second-half goals as McBride converted a penalty kick in the 48th minute and Pete Marino tied it with three minutes remaining.

McBride leads the league in scoring with five goals and two assists.

The Eastern Conference leaders, the Tampa Bay Mutiny (4-2), spotted the Colorado Rapids (2-3) a 1-0 halftime lead, but came back with a pair of second-half goals in their 2-1 win before 9,171 at Mile High stadium in Denver the lowest weekend crowd in the league since it kicked off last month.

Steve Ralston connected for the game-winner in the 76th minute against English international goalkeeper Chris Woods, in his MLS debut, after former U.S. international Cle Kooiman set of Ivan McKinley's tap-in the 62nd minute. Jean Harbort's 10th-minute penalty kick was Colorado's lone goal.

In a meeting of the league's two weakest teams, the New York/New Jersey MetroStars (2-3) prevailed over struggling D.C. United.

STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	GF	GA	PTS
Tampa Bay	4	2	13	9	12
Columbus	3	3	14	10	9
New England	2	3	7	9	4
D.C.	1	6	7	13	3
NY-NJ	2	3	5	9	2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	GF	GA	PTS
Los Angeles	5	0	11	5	15
Dallas	5	2	10	9	11
San Jose	3	4	10	8	9
Kansas City	3	4	13	18	7
Colorado	2	3	9	9	6



Conchita Martinez of Spain gestures holding up four fingers after she claimed a record fourth consecutive Italian Open tennis title after beating Swiss 15-year-old Martina Hingis in the women's final May 12 (Reuters photo)

Martinez ends Hingis' fairytale run in Rome

ROME (AP) — Spain's Conchita Martinez extended her dominance of the Italian Open with an unprecedented fourth straight title by stopping 15-year-old Martina Hingis' best run as a professional.

The one-sided 6-2, 6-3 loss to Martinez in Sunday's final of the clay court tournament showed Hingis — long touted as the sport's next star — that there's still room to improve, though the Swiss player did beat top-ranked Steffi Graf en route to becoming the event's youngest finalist ever.

The \$2.2 million men's edition started Monday, with world No. 2 and top seed Thomas Muster looking for a repeat title. First-day action featured Goran Ivanisevic,

the second seed, against Greg Rusedski, and No. 15 seed Todd Martin against Karol Kucera.

Although the draw features 26 of the top 30 men, the ATP attempted lure No. 3 Andre Agassi and No. 5 Boris Becker to Rome. But both players had prior commitments, according to tournament director Franco Bartoni.

On Sunday, Hingis failed to display the shot-making that carried her to a second career WTA final with victories over Graf in the quarterfinals and No. 7 seed Irina Spirlea in the semifinals. She also lost to Martinez 6-1, 6-0 in the Hamburg final last year.

"All that happened this week is a little bit too much," admitted Hingis, who will jump to 16th in the new WTA rankings. "I was too tired, I was already in the final and I was happy with that."

The Spaniard, who took the top prize of \$150,000 with her 20th successive match win at the Foro Italico, must be counted among the favorites at the French Open, the lone Grand Slam played on clay, which starts May 27.

"The win here has given me a lot of confidence," the third-ranked Martinez said. "I am feeling well for the future, although my shape will have to improve for Paris."

Mutola wins outdoor season debut

PORTLAND, Oregon (AP) — Maria Mutola, the No. 1-ranked woman runner at 800 metres the past three years, made her 1996 outdoor debut Sunday night with an

easy victory in the rain-soaked Adidas Oregon track and field classic.

The win was Mutola's 49th in a row in an 800 finals. Her lone loss over the last four

years came when she was disqualified in the semifinals of last year's World Championships.

In a steady rain at Lewis and Clark College, the 23-year-old from Mozambique took the lead early, then sprinted away from the competition over the final 200 metres.

"The weather was disappointing," Mutola said. "I was hoping to run 1:56 or 1:57 today, but I think with this weather, I'm satisfied with 1:58."

Actually, it wasn't even that fast. Mutola's official time was 1 minute, 59.23 seconds, her slowest since the

1994 New York games. She has won 16 800s since.

Suzi Hamilton, a 1992 U.S. Olympian at 1,500 metres, fell into third briefly with 200 metres to go, then outspurred Canadian Charmaine Crooks, a 1992 Olympic semifinalist, and took second in 2:01.63. Crooks was third in 2:01.87.

Rain is nothing new for Mutola, who has lived in the Eugene area since her high school years. Still, the conditions ruined her plans for a fast race in her only 800 before the Olympics.

Even though she was a heavy favorite, Mutola said she always feels the pressure

because of her four-year winning streak.

"Everybody's talking about winning and everybody's talking about my winning string, so it's been tough on me because I don't want to lose," she said.

At Atlanta, Mutola hopes to become the first athlete from her African homeland to win an Olympic gold medal. She also plans to compete in the 1,500.

Mutola is to run the 1,500 next week at the Atlanta invitational and the following week at the Prefontaine Classic in Eugene, then she'll go to Europe for three more 1,500s before the Olympics.

7th Arab Cup Winners' Cup Wihdat lose opening match

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan soccer league champions Al Wihdat Monday lost 2-1 to Olympic Al Mdyah of Algeria in the opening match of the 7th Arab Cup Winners' Cup Championship which kicked off here with eight teams taking part.

With both teams tied 1-1 in the final minutes of the match, Al Wihdat lost the chance to take the lead when Adnan Tawil squandered a penalty kick.

Al Mdyah then scored their winning goal from a superb free kick by Kamal Majmoun from well outside the penalty box. Al Wihdat's goalie Naser Ghendour could not stop the powerful shot as the ball hit the left hand goal post and smashed straight in giving Al Mdyah a crucial opening day lead.

Al Wihdat missed the efforts of captain Yousef Ammouri whose suspension by the Arab Soccer Federation (ASF) last year remained in place.

His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah deputised for His Majesty King Hussein at the opening ceremony of the elite soccer competition never before hosted in Jordan. Over 15,000 fans attended the match.

The participating teams have been divided into two groups. Group 1 includes hosts Al Wihdat, Al Muharraq of Bahrain, Al

Riyad of Saudi Arabia, and Olympic Mdyah of Algeria. Group 2 includes Al Itihad of Qatar, Jordan's Al Faisali, Al Mawrdah of Sudan, and Olympic Khreibkeh of Morocco.

In Monday's late match, Al Riyad of Saudi Arabia were to meet Al Muharraq of Bahrain.

Participating teams have never before won the title or even runner up position. Past champions, notably teams from Egypt and Tunisia, are missing the championship especially the championship record holders, Olympic Baidawi of Morocco, who won the title a record three consecutive times.

While Al Wihdat are playing the event for the first time, Al Faisali's participation set a championship record with their fourth appearance in the event. (Al Ramtha were the first to represent Jordan in 1993).

Jordanian results in the past four Cup Winners' Cup participations were not encouraging as Al Faisali and Al Ramtha failed to score a single win and have two draws and 11 defeats in total.

The second Jordanian team in the competition, Al Faisali, Tuesday play the first match when they meet Qatar's Al Itihad. The Qatari team are not easy opponents having a third place finish at the Asian Cup Winners' Cup to their credit. The team includes three professional players

including Moroccan Ahmad Bahja who played in the last World Cup, Iraqi Radi Shneishel, and Brazilian player Edelson.

Three other professionals are in competition: Claudio Santos of Brazil and Mohammed Al Aboushi of Syria (Al Riyad), Omar Adialo of Senegal (Olympic Khreibkeh).

The top two teams in each group will play the semifinal round starting May 20. The final match will be held May 22.

ASF official expresses thanks

Othman Sa'ad, secretary-general of the Arab Soccer Federation (ASF) expressed his appreciation of Al Wihdat and Jordan Soccer Federation officials' efforts to host this important gathering of Arab youth in Amman.

King Hussein gave Arab sportsmen a chance to meet in Amman in the Arab Cup in 1988. Now again we have been given this privilege, as top teams in Arab soccer have again met here for this championship," he said in his opening speech.

Wihdat Chairman Bahjat Shihab welcomed guests saying this type of gathering demonstrated Arab solidarity. He expressed pride in the championship which coincides with Jordan's independence day celebrations and Al Wihdat clubs celebrations of its 40th anniversary.

Sautin dominates diving competition

FORT LAUDERDALE, Florida (AP) — World diving champion Dmitry Sautin of Russia scored the only perfect 10 in the FINA/Kodak Diving Grand Prix and won the men's 10-metre platform event.

One day after dominating the men's 3-metre springboard final, Sautin scored 658.77 points Sunday to win the 10-metre platform over Germans Jan Hempel (617.22) and Helko Meyer (581.01). David Fieber of the United States finished fourth with 573.00 points.

On his fourth dive Sunday, Sautin scored the only perfect 10 in the four-day event with a back three-and-a-half in the tucked position.

"He's such a cool character," said American diver Dean Panaro, who finished second to Sautin in Saturday's 3-metre final. "All the divers call him 'the man'... he's the best in the world."

Armstrong wins Dupont title

KENNESAW, Georgia (R) — American Lance Armstrong rode to a dominating final-day time trial victory and claimed his fifth stage Sunday en route to winning the Tour Dupont by 3 minutes, 15 seconds over Pascal Hervé of France.

Riding into a headwind of more than 20 mph (32 km), Armstrong, the 1993 world road race titlist won the 9.1-mile (14.9 km) Marietta to Kennesaw time trial in 17 minutes, 56.949 seconds.

Danilo Nardello of Italy finished second in the final stage more than 28 seconds behind Armstrong in 18:25.153. Switzerland's Tony Rominger, the reigning Tour of Italy champion, finished third in the time trial in 18:26.625 and also placed third overall, 5:38 behind.

"It was a tricky time trial," said Armstrong, who became the race's only repeat winner and the only American titlist since 1992 when three-time Tour de France winner Greg Lemond won the race — the last victory of his career.

"It was hard to pick a rhythm, but I looked for straight line off a time track and thought I could do well. I

wanted to go out like this and not be disappointed like last year."

Last year, Armstrong won the overall title by two minutes over Russian Viatcheslav Ekimov, but faltered on the last day and finished fifth in the time trial more than two minutes behind.

A field of 112 cyclists from 16 teams began the \$260,000, eighth annual event May 1 in Wilmington, Delaware. The course progressed 1,225 miles (1971-km) through Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Tennessee before the final two stages in Georgia. There were 85 finishers.

Armstrong, who earned \$35,000 for the overall title, took the race lead after the road race stage 2 in Richmond, Virginia, and maintained it for the remaining 11 days. While claiming the Roanoke, Virginia, time trial in stage 3B, Armstrong set an event record averaging 32.89 mph (52.93 kph).

"The last half of the race was like a job," said Armstrong, who first completed the race in 1991 as a 19-year-old amateur.

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ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE WATER AUTHORITY OF JORDAN INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

Date: 6/5/1996
Loan No.: 89 66 400
IFB No.: 26/96/KW/ANIS/GA

1. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has received a loan from Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau in Deutsche Marks for the Water Supply of Greater Amman. It is intended that part of the proceeds of this loan will be applied to eligible payments under the contract(s) for which this IFB has been issued.
2. The Water Authority now invites sealed bids from Bidders in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Federal Republic of Germany (eligible Bidders) for supply and installation of computer hardware and peripherals for the Amman Network Information System (ANIS).
3. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from and inspect the bidding documents at the office of the Secretary General, Tenders Division, Water Authority, P.O. Box 2412 Amman, Jordan. Tel.: 680100, Tlx.: 22439 WAJ JO. Fax: 679143.
4. A complete set of the tender documents may be purchased by any interested eligible Bidder on the submission of a written application to the above and upon payment of a non refundable fee of JD 150.
5. All bids must be submitted in separate envelopes, marked "Technical" and "financial" be accompanied by a security in the amount of JD 5,000.- (in words: five thousand Jordan Dinars) and must be delivered to the office not later than 12:00 hours Jordan local time, on Saturday, 8/6/1996.
6. Thursday, 23/5/1996, is the last day set for the purchasing of tender documents.

Eng. Koussai Outeishat
Secretary General
Water Authority

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Former rivals establish new Kabul alliance

KABUL (AP) — A key opposition faction has agreed to an alliance with President Burhanuddin Rabbani and is supplying armed troops to fight alongside government soldiers, a defence ministry official said Monday.

More than 500 troops from the Hezb-e-Islami faction had arrived in the capital Kabul and military leaders were meeting with government commanders, said defence ministry spokesman Amrullah, who like many Afghans, uses only one name.

"The troops are in the city now and are ready to join the fight against the enemy," Mr. Amrullah told the Associated Press.

The government hopes to use the Hezb-e-Islami reinforcements to help drive Taliban rebels from Kabul's southern outskirts.

Hezb-e-Islami leader and former Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar agreed to the alliance after weeks of negotiations with the government, Mr. Amrullah said.

Mr. Hekmatyar's faction played a lead role in helping to drive occupying Soviet troops from Afghanistan during the 1980s.

But in 1992, when then-allied guerrilla forces captured Kabul, the Hezb-e-Islami, along with several other factions, splintered from their coalition and turned their guns on each other.

Mr. Hekmatyar, Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostum and Mr. Rabbani's main military commander Ahmed Shah Masood virtually redoubled Kabul to ruins as they battled each other for control of the Afghan capital.

Monday's new alliance could bolster the government's resolve to stand and fight the Taliban rebels, who now control more than half the country.

The Taliban, many of whom are former religious students, have vowed to oust Rabbani from Kabul and crush his nominal government.

Hezb-e-Islami forces suffered heavy losses in early 1995 when they were overrun by rival forces from the Taliban militia.

The Hezb-e-Islami was not expected to go ahead with the Rabbani alliance until a coalition of opposition groups had given its approval.

Earlier this month, several opposition factions met in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad to examine the proposed treaty between Mr. Rabbani and Mr. Hekmatyar.

It was unclear whether Monday's agreement adhered to an earlier proposal which split the responsibilities of the Afghan government between the factions.

Mr. Hekmatyar said earlier Mr. Rabbani was willing to relinquish control of the (Continued on page 7)



ATTACK ON SETTLERS: An Israeli settler, bleeding from his bandaged head, is rushed to hospital on Monday after being shot by suspected Palestinian militants near the settlement of Beit El in the West Bank (see page one) (Reuters photo)

Turkish coalition partners swap new charges

ANKARA (R) — Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's coalition partners on Monday accused him of sabotaging their alliance by revealing state secrets to the press in the latest corruption row to hit the government.

Trade and Industry Minister Yilmaz Erez said Mr. Yilmaz or a close aide leaked a document that showed former Premier Tansu Ciller had withdrawn \$6.5 million from a slush fund for security operations before she left office in March.

"Only the prime minister or his adviser has access to this kind of secret document," it couldn't have come from a third person," Mr. Erez told Reuters.

Ms. Ciller has accused fellow conservative Mr. Yilmaz and his party of using a growing list of corruption charges to prevent her from becoming prime minister again next year under their coalition deal.

Ms. Ciller has acknowledged delving into the slush fund to finance secret security operations which she has refused to divulge.

"The prime minister should either resign or open an investigation after secrets of this degree have come to light," said Mr. Erez, a close confidant of Ms. Ciller.

Mr. Yilmaz and scores of deputies from his Motherland Party last week angered Ms. Ciller's True Path Party by voting for an Islamist opposition motion to set up a parliamentary probe into separate corruption accusations against Ms. Ciller.

That inquiry, and another similar investigation approved last month, could recommend sending Ms. Ciller to the supreme court.

IFOR rejects Sarajevo demand to seek release of seven Muslims

SARAJEVO (AFP) — The NATO-led Bosnia peace force rejected Monday a Bosnian government demand that it secure the release of seven armed Muslims stopped by U.S. troops in a Serb-run area and handed over to Serb police.

Bosnian Vice-President Ejup Ganic demanded the NATO-led force obtain the men's release at a meeting Sunday with general Jan Heinrich, the second-in-command of the NATO-led Peace Implementation Force (IFOR).

"We have demanded their immediate release. They placed themselves under IFOR protection," Mr. Ganic said in a press release. But an IFOR officer who asked not to be named said Monday: "We have rejected the demand."

The seven armed Muslim soldiers gave themselves up to an IFOR unit near the Serb-held town of Zvornik in eastern Bosnia on Friday. IFOR then handed them over to the Serb police, who accused them of the murder of six Serbs.

IFOR said the Muslims were in the Republika Srpska — the Serb entity in Bosnia-Herzegovina — in breach of the Dayton peace accord, adding that Serb police had jurisdiction within that area.

IFOR spokesman major Simon Haselock said the seven men, dressed in a variety of military fatigues but who were in fact civilians, were armed with grenades, handguns and a homemade bomb.

Alexander Ivanko, spokesman for the U.N. police here, said the international police force would try to follow the legal proceedings against the seven, but admitted previous attempts to do so had failed.

Separately, Sarajevo newspapers reported that international investigators have unearthed 25 bodies since May 8 from a mass grave in north-west Bosnia.

On Sunday alone, 13 bodies were found by experts from the International War Crimes Tribunal and the Bosnian government. The bodies were found near the town of Sanski Most in a mass grave which is thought to contain about 100 bodies buried in May and June 1992.

The Sanski Most region was under the control of Bosnian Serbs until last October when it was recaptured during a joint Muslim-Croat offensive.

The bodies are predominantly Muslim.

Bildt wants elections delayed

Carl Bildt, Bosnia's top civilian peace official, wants elections in the divided, southern city of Mostar to be delayed, his spokesman said Monday.

Municipal elections are due to take place on May 31 in Mostar, a city in southern Bosnia-Herzegovina divided between Muslims and Croats, which has been under European Union administration since July 1994.

Column Murphy, spokesman for the Bosnia high representative, told reporters here that Mr. Bildt preferred the elections be delayed rather than held too early.

Pro-government and Muslim parties have refused to register lists for the vote, arguing that it would be impossible for all the refugees and displaced people who left the city during the war to take part.

The Croats want the elections to take place as scheduled.

Islamist party may join PNA cabinet

GAZA CITY (Agencies) — A new political party run by Hamas activists said Monday it wants to join Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's self-rule cabinet.

Fikri Abdul Latif, a spokesman for the National Islamic Salvation Party (NISP), told AFP Monday that leaders had "taken a general decision to enter the government in order to participate in building the homeland and in decision-making."

"Until now the government does not represent a national consensus," said Mr. Abdul Latif. "We want a national unity government." Arafat aides were in Egypt and could not be reached for comment.

Palestinian press reports said, however, that Mr. Arafat had not offered the party any ministerial position.

Mr. Arafat is due to present his new cabinet to the legislative council on Wednesday, and it will include Imad Faluji, an Islamist councillor who backs participation within the self-rule system.

Mr. Abdul Latif said the party would not accept the Oslo peace agreement with Israel even if it serves in the government. The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) rejected the accord and the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) recognition of Israel as a sell-out of Islamic rights.

Before the party could join the cabinet, he said, a dialogue would first be needed with the authority about "the tensions in Palestinian society."

He appeared to be referring to the arrest of some 600 Hamas and Islamic Jihad supporters since the beginning of a bombing campaign against Israeli targets in February. Many of those arrested are still behind bars.

Hamas officials said their movement would stay out of the Palestinian National Authority.

NISP last year, saying they would oppose peace deals through democratic and peaceful means.

"We have informal contacts with the Palestinian (National) Authority over (Continued on page 7)

Key suspect in Yemeni kidnap denies charge

RIYADH (AFP) — A Yemeni socialist leader living in Saudi Arabia denied accusations on Monday he had masterminded the kidnapping of the son of the governor of the Yemeni province of Aden.

"I have nothing to do with the abduction of the Aden governor's son, and I am ready to go to court if it is established that I ordered the kidnapping," Ahmad Ohad Sherif, a Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) central committee member, told AFP.

Colonel Sherif, a Yemeni Interior Ministry advisor, meanwhile, urged the Yemeni authorities to release members of his Khawlane tribe as well as his son Nayef, who have been arrested by the police.

Police said Sunday, that the Yemeni authorities would ask Saudi Arabia to extradite Col. Sherif in order to try him on charges he ordered Khawlane tribesmen to kidnap the governor's son, Maaz Taha Ahmad Ghanem, last Thursday.

"My job at the Interior Ministry is to guarantee security in the country," Col. Sherif said, adding the accusations against him were "without foundation." Col. Sherif has been living in the Saudi city of Jeddah since February.

Col. Sherif said he intended to return to the Yemeni capital Sanaa in the next few days, saying he had

left Yemen earlier this year to make the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The YSP official is also accused of having "received" orders from Abdul Rahman Al Jifri, the vice-president of the short-lived Yemen democratic republic who lives abroad and whose arrest Yemeni officials want.

The self-proclaimed republic was set up by secessionists in the southern city of Aden in May 1994, but collapsed after the south lost the war to northern forces.

The father of the 20-year-old hostage is a member of the General People's Congress of President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

The kidnappers are demanding the authorities return a house in Aden which the YSP gave in 1986 to Col. Sherif under the nationalisation campaign conducted at the time in the former South Yemen.

A court has ordered that the house be returned to the original owner.

The YSP has also denied any involvement in the kidnapping of Maaz Ghanem, who is being held hostage in the Dana region, around 80 kilometres southeast of Sanaa.

The kidnappers are demanding the release of the arrested tribesmen, a review of the court verdict on the house, and a pledge from the authorities not to prosecute them, mediators said.

Influential Sephardic rabbi endorses Peres

NETIVOT (AFP) — Labour leader Shimon Peres, in a tight election race to retain his post as prime minister, won the endorsement Monday of the spiritual leader of Israel's 500,000 Moroccan-born Sephardic Jews.

Baba Baruch Abukhatzeira gave Mr. Peres his blessing during a meeting at Netivot in the southern desert.

His only pledge was to demand a decision from Mr. Peres that, if elected, he would not yield Israeli sovereignty over any of Jerusalem in final peace talks with the Palestinians, who also claim the Holy City as their capital.

Israel's half-million Jews of Moroccan origin have traditionally tended to vote for conservative parties.

In the May 29 elections, Israelis will choose a new 120-member parliament, the Knesset, and for the first time directly choose the prime minister.

Latest opinion polls give Mr. Peres a lead of several points over his conservative challenger for the job, Benjamin Netanyahu, of the Likud bloc.

In a variation on the "modesty patrols" formed by ultra-orthodox Jews to guard against immorality in their neighbourhoods, rabbinic leaders have created squads to keep religious students from hanging campaign posters for

secular parties, it was reported Monday.

The Hebrew daily Maariv said the squads were created at a special meeting last week of ultra-orthodox community leaders in the Tel Aviv suburb of Bnei Brak after local students were found pasting up campaign posters for secular parties ahead of the elections.

The meeting also decided that any student in a Yeshiva, or Talmudic school, caught campaigning for non-religious parties would be expelled, the newspaper reported.

It said the squads, working at night, ripped down posters from secular parties like the right-wing Likud or the governing Labour Party.

The anti-campaigners also scrawled graffiti on the posters, including "Thou shalt not commit adultery" on pictures of Mr. Netanyahu — who last year admitted in public to having cheated on his wife.

On posters for Mr. Peres, the militants wrote "eccentric" (that man) — the term used by Jews 2,000 years ago to designate the renegade Jesus.

Ultra-orthodox leaders have expressed growing concern with the increase in support among religious Jews for the country's secular political groups at the expense of religious parties.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israelis more optimistic on peace

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israelis are growing more optimistic on the prospects of peace with their Arab neighbours, according to a Tel Aviv university survey published on Sunday. If found that 47 per cent of Jews in Israel were encouraged by progress in the peace process, up from 36 per cent in a similar poll carried out in October. The number of Jews disappointed by the peace process fell over the same period from 64 per cent down to 48 per cent, while the undecided rose from zero to five per cent in the new poll. The survey was carried out after Israel's April 11-27 onslaught against Hizbollah guerrillas in Lebanon. Fifty-seven per cent of the 503 Jews questioned said the operation in Lebanon was "partially or totally successful," while 83 per cent said it would not harm peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

Moroccan group urges releases of Tunisian

RABAT (R) — The independent Moroccan Human Rights Association on Monday called for the immediate release of a Tunisian human rights activist arrested in Tunisia. Faraj Fenish, a moderate human rights activist, was arrested last Friday and taken to the Interior Ministry headquarters for interrogation, an association spokesman said. Mr. Fenish was apparently arrested because he met opposition leader Khamis Chamari and was suspected of carrying documents on the human rights situation in Tunisia, the association said. The Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights earlier said Mr. Fenish did not take a flight from Tunis to Marseille, France as scheduled on Friday and urged Tunisia to release him immediately. Tunisian authorities have made no comment on Mr. Fenish.

Libyan minister pledges solidarity with Cuba

HAVANA (R) — Libyan Foreign Minister Omar Mustafa Al Muntasser affirmed his country's solidarity with Cuba and its interest in strengthening bilateral ties, Frensa Latina reported. Since his arrival in Cuba last Friday, the Libyan official had held conversations with Cuban Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina, Minister for Foreign Investments Ibrahim Ferradaz and other top officials of the island. Mr. Muntasser said that Libya's solidarity with Fidel Castro's government has multiplied as a result of the signing into law by President Bill Clinton in March of a bill which strengthens the 32-year-old United States embargo on trade with Cuba. The U.S. government views both Cuba and Libya as undesirable states and prohibits U.S. citizens and business representatives from visiting or carrying on financial transactions with them. The Libyan foreign minister said he favoured increased cooperation between Havana and Tripoli and expressed Libya's interest in acquiring Cuban sugar, coffee, tobacco, medicines and medical aid.

COLUMN 8

10-year-old held in connection with baby's death

DENVER (R) — A 10-year-old boy was being held in a juvenile detention centre as a potential suspect in the beating death of a 18-month-old baby girl, police said. The baby was brought to the hospital Saturday night with "significant traumatic injuries: to her body and died Sunday morning, according to a statement from suburban Englewood, Colorado police. The death is reminiscent of a case in California where a 6-year-old boy is accused of beating a one-month-old baby nearly to death. Police said an ambulance was dispatched after emergency personnel received a call that the baby was not breathing. The 10-year-old unidentified boy was believed to be the baby's sister. An autopsy was scheduled for Monday to determine the cause of death of the infant.

Chinese non-virgins facing fines

BEIJING (AFP) — Hospitals in one of China's largest industrial cities, Wuban, have started fining women who come in for a pre-marital checkup and are found to have lost their virginity, a report said Friday. The women can be fined anything between 200 yuan (\$25) and 2,000 yuan. The Nanfang Weekly reported, adding that the practice had provoked a storm of controversy. Chinese couples are required to have a physical check-up before they get married to, among other things, determine whether they are fertile. In Wuban, however, the examination has now taken on the subject of moral character, with women deemed to have had pre-marital sex being forced to write a self-criticism as well as pay a fine. Defending the policy, the director of the Marriage Department at the Wuban Bureau of Civil Affairs, Zhang Xianwu, said the stiff fines were necessary to stamp out immoral trends that had emerged as the result of China's opening to the outside world. Mr. Zhang insisted that the policy was consistent with the state marriage law, but admitted that the level of the fine had been chosen by the local authorities. If a woman is examined and found to be pregnant, she will be fined an extra 100 yuan for each month that has passed between conception and the check-up. "This is because they have violated the family planning policy," the newspaper quoted Mr. Zhang as saying. The policy has provoked a howl of protest from the couples themselves as well as legal experts.

Computer worker switches to cleaning houses in the nude

KANSAS CITY, MO. (R) — A Kansas City computer worker was so bored with his office job that he quit and launched a business cleaning people's homes in the nude. Glen Jarvis, owner of Butler In The Buff, told this week's edition of the Kansas City Business Journal he was paid \$15 an hour to clean and polish without his clothes on. A self-described naturalist, Mr. Jarvis said he developed his niche business because it appealed to his own philosophy. Before starting a new job, Jarvis said he met the customer to make it clear he was there just to clean. Customers — male or female — were free to watch him work.

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